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OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

**"MIX A LITTLE
FOOLISHNESS WITH
YOUR SERIOUS PLANS.
IT IS LOVELY TO BE
SILLY AT THE RIGHT
moment."**



-HORACE

Click on Ad to sign up!



Greenhouse Raffle

Prizes are:

Greenhouse (12'x7.5', 2 shelves, 2 outlets, light)
Hunting Blind (Hexigon with 6 shooting windows)

Free delivery within 20 miles

2 Dairy Queen \$50 Gift Cards

Need not be present to win. \$10 Donation

Drawing to be held April 15th

**Contact any Robotics member for a ticket or
call Jim Lane at 605/397-7013.**

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Work Begins on U.S. Highway 212 in Watertown

WATERTOWN, S.D. – Reede Construction will begin construction on Highway 212 from just west of Highway 81 to just east of 2nd Street W. in Watertown on Monday, April 8, 2019.

This segment of the project will be constructed one-half at a time leaving two-way traffic in the opposing lanes.

The \$10.3 million project will reconstruct one mile of Highway 212 from Highway 20 to Highway 81 and includes utility work, grading, storm sewer, curb and gutter, sidewalk, structure, concrete paving, lighting and signal upgrades.

Public meetings for the project will be held Thursdays at 10 a.m. at the Watertown Police Department located on N. Maple St. in Watertown beginning April 11. These meetings will help the public to stay up to date on project timing and answer questions.

Thru truck traffic is being advised to take an alternate route due to anticipated traffic volumes and narrowed lanes. All local traffic should make sure to slow down, be prepared to stop and watch for turning vehicles.

The overall completion date for the project is set for Oct. 25, 2019.

For complete road construction information, visit www.safetravelusa.com/sd or dial 511.

NOW HIRING!

Truss Pros

10954 424th Avenue | Britton, SD 57430

Looking for assemblers - both shifts

*** New Starting Wage - \$15/hr day shift and
\$16/hr night shift
Overtime Available**

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Comprehensive Health, Dental & Vision insurance
- Life Insurance
- Short-term Disability and Long-term Disability
- 401k
- Holiday Pay
- Vacation Pay
- Paid Sick Leave
- Referral Bonuses

To apply visit www.uslbn.com/careers or call Diane at 605-448-2929.

Noem Declares Statewide Day of Prayer

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem has declared Sunday, April 7, 2019, a Statewide Day of Prayer for South Dakotans affected by the flooding and disastrous conditions.

"In the last few weeks, South Dakota has been deeply impacted by extreme weather and severe flooding," said Noem. "As a result of these storms, many communities have been left with destroyed roads, bridges, and culverts, stranded livestock, and flooded homes."

"This coming Sunday, I am asking South Dakotans to join me in praying for the well-being of our state, our first responders, and all those who've been affected by this disaster," Noem continued. "By the grace of God, our communities will emerge from this challenge stronger than ever."

You can read the governor's proclamation on the next page.

Individuals who want to volunteer in storm recovery efforts are encouraged to call 211 – the state's helpline center. For more flood recovery resources, visit sdresponse.gov/flood.



4255 6th Ave

Hi, my name is Bary Keith, a Groton resident. I have just recently joined the Harr Motors sales team. I'm excited to start helping people get into the right vehicle for them. Right now, any vehicle purchased from me, until the end of April, will receive an Autostart at no charge. Give me a call (605-216-6952) or (605-725-8624) or stop out and see me at Harr Motors today!!!

Executive Proclamation
State of South Dakota
Office of the Governor

Whereas, South Dakota had suffered from an unprecedented disaster caused by blizzard conditions and widespread flooding, which has profoundly affected the livelihoods and living conditions of citizens; and,

Whereas, throughout our history, South Dakotans have united in prayer to God to humbly ask for strength and steadfastness during times of difficulty; and,

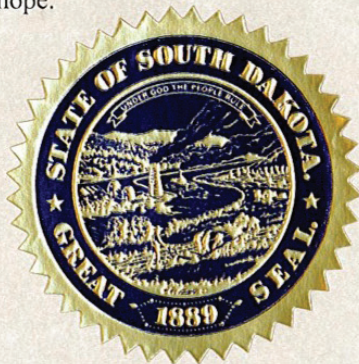
Whereas, prayer provides peace and guidance in times of crisis and conflict, and reminds us of the comforting assurance of God's love for us all; and,

Whereas, it seems right and fitting that the citizens of South Dakota are urged to pray for the well-being of our fellow citizens and our State, to pray for all those in other states who are hurt by this disaster, to pray for those who are working to respond to this crisis, and to pray for all recovery efforts; and,

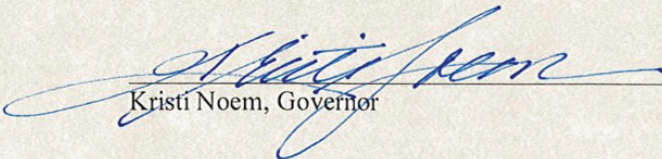
Now, Therefore, I, Kristi Noem, Governor of the state of South Dakota, do hereby proclaim Sunday, April 7, 2019 as

STATEWIDE DAY OF PRAYER

in South Dakota and encourage individuals to pray on their own or with others as an expression of faith and hope.

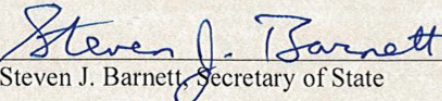


In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the state of South Dakota, in Pierre, the Capital City, this First Day of April in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Nineteen.



Kristi Noem, Governor

Attest:



Steven J. Barnett, Secretary of State

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Groton Prairie Mixed

Coyotes 71, Cheetahs 65 ½ Foxes 62, Jackelopes 56, Chipmunks 53, Shih Tzus 52 ½

High game: Men – Brad Larson 225, Roger Colestock 212, Chris Kassube 197
Women – Dar Larson 170, Nicole Kassube 166, Sue Stanley 162

High series: Men – Brad Waage 569, Brad Larson 562, Roger Colestock 548
Women – Darci Spanier 474, Dar Larson 467, Sue Stanley 466



Groton Lions Club



**Saturday,
April 13,
2019
10 a.m.
Sharp**

**Groton City Park
(Weather Permitting)**

Your local Lions Club members have filled and will be hiding nearly 1,200 Easter eggs for the annual event. Children from ages infant to 10 are welcome.

The Groton City Park will be divided into 3 age groups (Under 4, 4-6 and 7-10) for the Egg Hunt. We ask that all parents/children meet at the picnic shelter to begin.

Groton City Notice

**Sump Pumps must
be discharged
OUTSIDE!**



Failure to comply will result in fines.

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Community Events

Sunday, April 7, 2019

Pops Concert at Groton Area High School
2:00 PM and 7:00 PM

Silver Skates Annual Meeting

Does your child enjoy ice skating?
Do you like to see community traditions continue?
Do you have creative or organizational talents waiting to be shared with others?

Please join us for the Carnival of Silver Skates annual meeting on Wednesday, May 1 at 7:00 p.m. at the warming house.

Groton City-Wide RUMMAGE

Sponsored by
the Groton
Lions Club



SALE

Saturday, May 4, 2019
8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

All listings are due by 5 p.m. on April 24 to City Hall or email your listing to city.april@nvc.net. \$15 per listing.

Listings will be available on Groton, SD Lions Club Facebook Page and www.city.grotonsd.gov

Hiring High Schoolers!

If you are 16 or older and need a summer job, the Groton Rehabilitation Center has the job for you!

During the summer, you can work inside and get some experience for a CNA career in the future!

We are an equal employment opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status or any other characteristic protected by law.



1106 N 2nd Street ~ Groton, SD ~ 605-397-2365

2019 Groton Area Elementary Kindergarten Roundup (Screening) for children turning 5 on/or before Sept. 1, 2019

Friday, April 12

Parents of children who will be turning 5 on or before September 1, 2019, in the Groton Area School District are asked to contact Heidi Krueger at the Groton Area Elementary School during school hours at 397-2317 to set up a screening time or to confirm their screening time.

*Students currently attending Junior Kindergarten will not be screened at this time.

Packets will be sent home this week with a scheduled time and additional paperwork that will need to be completed.

Kindergarten Roundup will take place at the Groton Area Elementary School. Please check in at the office.

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Aberdeen, Watertown National Guard Soldiers to deploy to Europe

ABERDEEN, S.D. - About 115 Soldiers from the South Dakota Army National Guard's Alpha Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion and 147th Forward Support Company have received a mobilization order for an eight month deployment to Europe beginning in September.

The units will deploy within European Command's area of responsibility in support of allied nation partnerships and regional security and stability goals.

The Aberdeen-based Alpha Battery is equipped with the Multiple Launch Rocket System, or MLRS, and is capable of providing artillery support to a brigade, division, corps or coalition task force. The Watertown-based Forward Support Company is a multifunctional logistics unit which provides supply and maintenance support.

Soldiers from Alpha Battery and the FSC will follow currently deployed members of Bravo Battery and the FSC that are supporting Operation Atlantic Resolve in Europe. Operation Atlantic Resolve builds readiness, increases interoperability and enhances the bond between ally and partner militaries using multinational training events in Germany, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania.

Soldiers from the two units will report to Fort Bliss, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deployment overseas.

Shop the
Rural Route Road Trip

April 6th 9am-6pm
April 7th 12-6pm

Shop over 20 businesses who specialize in handmade and vintage goods! Pick up a Rural Route Road Trip ticket at any location, collect punches at each business to be entered to win a door prize. For more information check out this event on Facebook.

<p>Groton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Front Porch 605 - 1506 W. Aspen Ave. <p>Turton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dusty Décor 57 - 40336 161st St. <p>Doland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Just Beecuz Floral & Gifts - 205 Dakota St. W.• Out of the House - 205 Dakota St. W. <p>Redfield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spink Co. Mercantile - 6 E. 7th• Stuck on Scrapbooking - 632 Main St.• Hardie Homespun - Main St. Mini Plaza <p>Tulare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prairie Pickers - 37485 183rd St. <p>Chelsea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• JB's Country Store - 36836 155th St. <p>Aberdeen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Junque Shack - 422 S. Illinois St. - Suite 3	<p>Ipswich</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Love Repurposed - 3585- 133rd St.• Styles by Sylte - 921 Prairie View Ave. <p>Faulkton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oil Up Buttercup - 710 Main St.• Quilter's Corner - 148 8th Ave. S.• The Lazy Way Café - 117 8th Ave. S.• 212 Flea Market - 708 Main St.• The Shops - 600 Main St. - Unit 4<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 163rd St. Design• R Duo Designs• By The Creek Boutique• The Steel Barn• Tiny House Boutique• Stepping Stone Embroidery• Designs by Deliah
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SD-638867-1



Public vaping ban passed in S.D. amid some controversy

By: Bart Pfankuch

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit news organization. Find more in-depth reporting at www.sdnewswatch.org.

On July 1, the use of e-cigarettes or other vaping products will become illegal in almost all South Dakota workplaces and public buildings, including bars, restaurants and casinos.



After a somewhat hurried process, lawmakers in March voted to treat e-cigarettes the same as combustible tobacco products when used in public places. Gov. Kristi Noem signed the bill into law on March 27, allowing South Dakota to join a dozen other states with similar laws.

When the law takes effect, anyone vaping or using e-cigarettes in public buildings or a workplace could be charged with a petty offense, which is a civil charge that usually carries a fine.

Backers of the measure claim it will protect the air quality in public spaces and allow non-users to avoid breathing or smelling aerosol clouds from vaping that can contain addictive nicotine or other toxins. They also said the ban will help reverse the growing trend of vaping by youths.

"We need to stop the vaping process where we can, and this is a step in the right direction," said Rep. Carl Perry, R-Aberdeen,

A law banning vaping in public places from bars and restaurants to workplaces and stores takes effect July 1 in South Dakota. Some oppose the ban and the way it became law.

the lead House sponsor of the ban. "You're helping kids, and you're helping people who go out for dinner; you're keeping second-hand vaping products out of their face and out of their lungs."

But opponents of the ban, including some conservative lawmakers and representatives of the vaping industry and the beverage and gaming association, say the law is unnecessary and infringes on the property rights of business owners and the freedom of adults who legally use vaping products.

They argue that unlike smoked tobacco, e-cigarette vapors dissipate quickly and the science is incomplete on whether second-hand vapors have the same health impacts as second-hand smoke. Opponents also say the law is unnecessary because most South Dakota businesses that don't want vaping inside their walls have already banned it and that adult-focused businesses should be allowed to decide whether to allow it.

"It wasn't done right, and I think this is going to be a big surprise for a lot of folks," said Caleb Rose, co-owner of Black Hills Vapors, which has locations in Rapid City and Spearfish. "A lot of folks like the fact they can vape inside of a bar, and for some it makes it more effective as a smoking replacement because they don't have to go outside."

During House debate on the measure, Rep. Tim Rounds, R-Pierre, said he supports keeping children away from e-cigarettes but wasn't convinced a statewide indoor ban for adults would prevent youth use.

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Caleb Rose, co-owner of Black Hills Vapors in Rapid City and Spearfish, at left, and Zach Burckhard, general manager of the Rapid City store, support strict rules to keep vaping products away from people under 18. But they do not think an indoor vaping ban passed by the 2019 Legislature will help keep kids from vaping. Photo: Bart Pfankuch

and less smell and aftertaste. They also say e-cigarettes help addicted smokers wean themselves away from smoking and eventually quit.

But the e-cigarettes have drawn the wrath of parents, educators and policymakers who worry over the dramatic rise in use by youths, despite a state law banning sales to minors under 18. Hundreds of cities across the nation have passed local bans on vaping use in public places.

While few studies and data collection have been done on adult use of vaping products, the evidence is clear that e-cigarette use is rising dramatically among youth.

In one year, from 2017 to 2018, e-cigarette use rose by 78 percent among high school students and by 48 percent by children in middle school, according to the Youth Tobacco Survey released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

In an ironic twist, some studies show that vaping products — marketed as a way for adult smokers to quit tobacco — may actually entice youth users to become smokers.

The U.S. Surgeon General reported in 2016 that early evidence suggests that e-cigarette use is “strongly associated” with the use of traditional tobacco products by youths and young adults.

Across South Dakota, educators are increasingly raising alarms about vaping among high school and middle school students. Many say the trend of youth use is being driven by the arrival of Juul devices, which resemble a USB flash drive and deliver a nearly undetectable amount of nicotine vapor.

Lawmakers who sponsored the vaping ban consistently gave statistics about youth use, yet the law contains no language related to minors.

David Benson, a lobbyist with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, said the ban could indirectly reduce youth use of vaping products.

“There’s a perception factor here that if you’re a family and you’re bringing your kids to a restaurant or

“We’ve got unintended consequences here,” Rounds said. “We’re trying to protect our youth by telling adults, 30-, 40-, 50-year-olds that when they go to a casino or a nightclub or a facility that is for adults, they aren’t allowed to use this.”

Rounds said the ban violates the rights of business owners.

“It does take away that proprietor’s right, that property owner or that person who is in business, it takes away their right to allow that to happen on his property or her property,” he said.

Growth in vaping leads to regulation

The category of e-cigarette products includes a wide range of hand-held devices that ignite a gel to produce a cloud of vapor, often including nicotine, that is inhaled by the user. Vaping has increased sharply in the past decade.

Among users and sellers, the products are considered safer than cigarettes, with fewer known carcinogens

to an activity at a public place and there are individuals engaging in e-cigarette use, it sends the wrong message that this is acceptable," Benson said.

"I feel like the industry is normalizing itself and can regulate itself. As far as being used in movie theaters, or being used in a restaurant and someone is reaching over a booth and blowing clouds into a baby stroller, that's just not happening." - Caleb Rose,

Benson provided a 7-page handout to the governor before she signed the bill into law with an overview of studies suggesting that vaping products are targeted at youth and also that vaping products contain potentially harmful elements that have yet to be fully examined.

The reports said that nicotine can negatively affect youth brain development and damage the cardiovascular system or hurt a fetus during pregnancy. The data also indicate that some e-cigarettes can contain formaldehyde, volatile organic compounds and metals including nickel and lead, though in smaller amounts than in tobacco cigarettes.

"The Surgeon General report indicates that e-cigarette aerosol is not harmless, and our

goal is to reduce that risk of exposure from the toxic elements in that aerosol," said Benson, who testified in favor of the bill during committee hearings. "We see this as a first step in the work that our advocates are engaged in to address this growing concern."

Rose, of Black Hills Vapors, said some people do vape in public buildings or try to discreetly take a quick puff where maybe it wouldn't be considered polite.

But Rose said most vape users are aware of their surroundings and respectful of others around them.

"I feel like the industry is normalizing itself and can regulate itself," he said. "As far as being used in movie theaters, or being used in a restaurant and someone is reaching over a booth and blowing clouds into a baby stroller, that's just not happening."

Rose said the public ban is unlikely to have a negative impact on his sales or the popularity of vaping. He said anything that draws attention to vaping increases public interest and awareness and may lead more smokers to give it a try as a cessation method.

Slow start, fast finish to vaping ban

Unlike the South Dakota public smoking ban that underwent heavy debate in 2010 and a statewide referendum with more than 315,000 total votes (64 percent voted in favor), the public vaping ban came about quickly and passed with relatively little fanfare or discussion.

Perry's first draft of the bill – presented as a broadly worded "vehicle" bill — would have imposed the same 35 percent excise tax on e-cigarettes that is now collected on tobacco sales. His new tax was quickly rebuffed by his Republican colleagues, so he regrouped and met with public health groups to craft the measure that ultimately passed.

Some people affected by the ban said it was difficult to monitor the bill and participate in the discussion because it changed quickly and dramatically in a short time period. The revised measure passed the House on a 48-19 vote and in the Senate by a 21-13 vote.

"They kept talking about starting a conversation, and we'd like to be part of that conversation," said Rose, who has now registered as a lobbyist and supports the new Dakota Vaping Association that supports thoughtful e-cigarette legislation. "But we'd like to be invited and not have to scramble when it is hog-housed and changed the morning of a vote."

The vaping association opposes youth e-cigarette use and backs banning online e-cigarette sales, a

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Many businesses already have banned vaping indoors, including Meadowbrook Lanes in Rapid City. The public vaping ban passed by the 2019 Legislature will take effect in public buildings, businesses, bars, restaurants and workplaces on July 1. Photo: Bart Pfankuch

ABOUT BART PFANKUCH



Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal. Bart has spent almost 30 years as a reporter and editor.

common way for underage users to obtain products, Rose said.

A vape shop owner in Pierre predicts that the vaping ban may lead some adult e-cigarette users to either return to smoking cigarettes or take up the habit anew.

Michael Shoup, owner of Oahe Pawn in Pierre, which also sells vaping products and rents trucks, said some of his e-cigarette customers are professionals in Pierre who use vaping as an alternative to smoking cigarettes. Those customers, who include an attorney and state office workers, discreetly vape at work or at a bar but will have to go outside when the ban takes effect.

"They didn't have to leave their desk at work or if they went to a pub, they didn't smell like a cigarette and have that taste on their tongue all day, so it worked well for them," Shoup said. "Now, they'll have to go outside and be with cigarette smokers, which creates a big temptation to return to smoking."

Shoup's business will be affected by the vaping ban in that his customers will no longer be allowed sample vape products inside. The law for e-cigarettes will be the same as for cigarette and cigar stores in which it is legal to smoke inside if the business gets 75 percent or more of overall revenue from the tobacco products.

Shoup's vape sales aren't that high, so customers will have to step outside. He said that is not a major inconvenience but could deter some customers from trying nicotine-free vaping gels as they slowly wean off nicotine.

"They are penalizing the people who are trying to use vaping to get off cigarettes, and there is nothing in the language that addresses youth use," Shoup said. "Moving it outside won't stop kids from using it. If anything, it will give it even more of a mystique."

Pearson's Americanism Essay qualifies for state

The Groton American Legion Auxiliary announced its District Four winners of the Americanism essay and poetry contests. Logan Pearson placed first and will qualify for state competition, Jayden Helvig placed second and Colby Dunker and Alexis Geffre both placed third. Their photos and what they wrote follow on this and the next two pages.

How Can We Address and Prevent Veteran Homelessness in Our Communities?

Logan Pearson, sixth grade, Class II Essay First Place (qualifies for state competition)

We can prevent veteran homelessness in our communities in many ways. We can start by adding the right programs within our state and local communities. We can ask our communities to open shelters or offer low income or free housing to our veterans and families.

We could ask local businesses to help raise donations to supply clothing, household needs, hygiene products, and free school meals to veteran's children. We could offer free medical care clinics to the veterans and their families. We could ask our local food service operations to donate any leftover food to the veterans and their families.

We could give them Bibles to read and ask them to come to church to offer them hope and security in God.

If we see a homeless veteran in the street, we can offer to buy them a meal, or a warm cup of coffee. One time my mom and I were driving back from our cousin's house, and we saw a man holding a sign asking for free food or money. We went to the local restaurant nearby and bought him a couple of sandwiches to eat, water to drink, and snacks for a later meal, plus \$10. He was very grateful.

We could offer to buy shelter for the night at a local motel. We could ask our local motels to give our homeless veterans a free room for the night if they have any rooms available so that our veterans could have a warm and safe place to sleep for the night and then have a nice warm shower the next day.

When our veterans go serve our country, they fight for our freedom. I think we can at least thank them and show our appreciation by doing the simple suggestions above.



How Can We Address and Prevent Veteran Homelessness in our Communities?

Colby Dunker, seventh grade, Class III Essay Third Place

In South Dakota, there are 130 homeless veterans according to the South Dakota Department of Veteran Affairs. I feel that we need to help the homeless veterans since they helped us. You can tell the problem is getting fixed because the rate of homeless veterans went down 56% in the United States. Three ways we can fix this problem is by making housing more affordable, extend transportation, and take the challenge.

A reason why vets are homeless is because the housing is so expensive. The vets have a job but still can't pay for the housing. A way we can help is by making VA housing more affordable. By doing this you can encourage property owners and landlords to house veterans in existing homes. The government could also encourage land owners and landlords to have lower rates for homeless vets as well. The government could help with move-in costs.

We can also extend transportation options. Transportation services can help keep veterans with a steady job. Transportation links veterans to steady jobs, health care, and support services are vital to have housing. Directly in our partnership with others, many states and communities provide discounted or free transit rides for veterans. Veteran service organizations and nonprofits may offer discounted or free bus or train passes to vets. Ride-sharing and bike sharing are other ways to help vets get around, so they can stay off the streets.

Another way for all of us to help is by taking the CHALLENGE. The challenge stands for: community, homelessness assessment, local education, networking groups. This ongoing assessment unites homeless service providers, advocates, veterans, and citizens toward the goal of identifying and meeting the evolving needs of veterans who are homeless.

To keep our homeless vets off the street we need to help with many things like pushing to make housing more affordable for veterans, try and make there be many options of affordable housing for vets, and help nonprofit organizations such as CHALLENGE, Wounded Warrior projects and many more. The numbers of homeless veterans are going down a bit, but we still need to help so that there aren't any veterans left on the streets.



Saddle Up for Veterans

Alexis Geffre, sixth grade, Class IV Poetry Third Place

Saddle up for Veterans; let's go for a ride,
Because of everything you have done we have great pride.
Giving up part of your life so that we may be free
I can hardly believe all of the things you have done for me.

Saddle up for Veterans, for all they have done
We know that at times it was not any fun.
Some of you even lost great friends,
Losses like that take time to mend.

Saddle up for Veterans, who are tried and true
To the red, white, and blue and the stars and stripes, too!
Because of your courage, bravery, and more
We live in the best country from shore to shore.

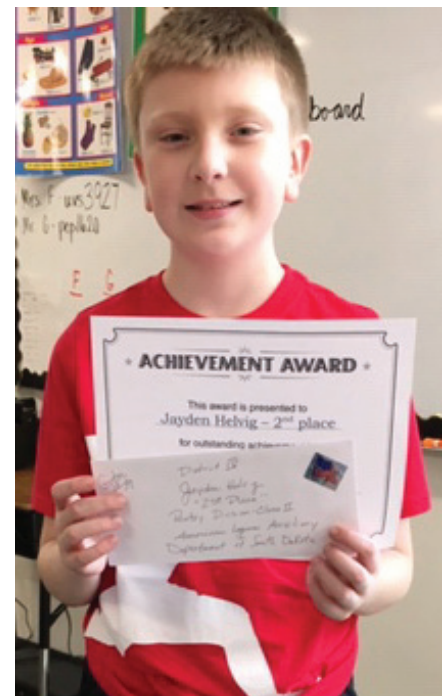


Saddle Up for Veterans

Jayden Helvig, fourth grade, Class II Poetry Second Place

For all of those who have fought for me;
Thank you, for helping us be free!
Soldiers old and soldiers young;
That have fought in battles both lost and won.
When duty called many put their lives on hold;
They saddled up to fight for the rich, poor, young, and old.
They have risked their lives, done their part;
They've shone us bravery from the start.
Now it's time to do our part;
To give respect from our heart.
To salute the flag when it goes by;
To honor them, both dead and alive.

Jayden Helvig



GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

April 8, 2019 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of March 11, 2019 and March 25, 2019 school board meeting as drafted.
2. Approval of North Central Special Education Co-Op (NCSEC) agenda items...*as fiscal agent*.
3. Approval of March 2019 District bills for payment.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approval of March 2019 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approval of March 2019 School Transportation Report.
4. Approval of March 2019 School Lunch Report
5. School Board Committee Reports:
 - a. **Building, Grounds, & Transportation:** Clint Fjelstad, Merle Harder
 - b. **Personnel, Policy, & Curriculum:** Deb Gengerke, Kara Pharis
 - c. **Negotiations:** Grant Rix, Steve Smith, Marty Weismantel
6. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Review district health insurance plan options with motion to adopt plan offerings for 2019-2020.
2. Adopt renewal motion for Associated School Boards Protective Trust (Health Fund).
3. Adopt renewal motion for Associated School Boards Protective Trust (Worker's Compensation Fund).
4. Executive session pursuant to SDCL 1-25-2(1) personnel and SDCL 1-25-2(4) negotiations.

ADJOURN

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Day County Emergency Management



35 mins ·

Pierpont Dam spillway has some surface damage waiting for SD GFP dam inspector to come and look at it. We will be watching closely and as a precaution we have an evacuation plan ready. 4-4-19



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Today in Weather History

April 5, 2000: High winds of 35 to 50 mph gusting to around 70 mph blew across central and north central South Dakota from the late morning to the late afternoon hours. As a result, several trees and many tree branches were downed, many structures, roofs, billboards, and road signs were damaged, a few mobile homes were overturned, and some power outages occurred. Not only did the high winds make driving challenging, but at some locations, they stirred up dirt causing visibilities to drop to near zero at times. Some detours and traffic collisions resulted due to the low visibility in blowing dirt. Airborne objects broke some windows across the area. One house had all of the windows on the front porch blown out. Also, a few semi tractor-trailers were tipped over by the high winds. Wind gusts included 60 mph at Pierre, 63 mph at Kennebec, 64 mph at Mobridge, 65 mph at Pollock, and 71 mph at McLaughlin. The high winds and extremely dry conditions combined with downed and arcing electrical lines, out of control burns, and smoldering embers from previous fires resulted in several grassfires across central and north central South Dakota. Several thousand acres of grassland, hundreds of hay bales and haystacks, along with some trees and fences were burned. Also, the smoke from some of these fires created low visibilities and difficult driving conditions on some roads.

1815: The Tambora Volcano in Java began erupting on this day. A few days later on the 10, Tambora produced the largest eruption known on the planet in the last 10,000 years. Ash from the volcano would circle the globe, blocking sunlight and leading to the unusually cold summer in 1816. On 6/6/1816, snow would fall as far south of Connecticut with some places in New England picking up 10 inches. On July 4th, 1816, the temperature at Savannah GA plunged to 46 degrees. Eastern North America and Europe had freezing nighttime temperatures in August. Click [HERE](#) for more information from Volcano Discovery.com

1936: Approximately 454 people were killed in the second-deadliest tornado outbreak ever in U.S. More than 12 twisters struck Arkansas to South Carolina. An estimated F5 tornado cut a path 400 yards wide through the residential section of Tupelo, Mississippi. At least 216 people were killed, and 700 were injured. The tornado had a 15-mile long path and did \$3 million in damage. One of the survivors in Tupelo was a baby of an economically strapped family who had an infant they'd recently named Elvis Aaron Presley. Gainesville, Georgia had at least 203 fatalities and 934 injuries from an estimated F4 tornado that occurred early the following morning.

1972: An F3 tornado, touched down at a marina on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, and then tore through Vancouver, Washington. The tornado killed six people, injuring 300 others, and causing more than five million dollars damage. It was the deadliest tornado of the year and the worst on record for Washington.

1945 - The temperature at Eagles Nest, NM, plunged to 45 degrees below zero to establish an April record for the United States. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1955 - The Northern Rockies and the Northern High Plains were in the midst of a four day storm which produced 52 inches of snow at Lead, located in the Black Hills of western South Dakota. (David Ludlum)






1972 - A tornado, 500 yards wide at times, touched down at a marina on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, and then tore through Vancouver WA killing six persons, injuring 300 others, and causing more than five million dollars damage. It was the deadliest tornado of the year, and the worst of record for Washington. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - An unprecedented April blizzard began in the northeastern U.S. One to two feet of snow fell across Massachusetts and Connecticut, and up to 26 inches was reported in Maine. New York City received a foot of snow. Winds reached 70 to 80 mph during the storm, and the storm also produced numerous thunderstorms, which contributed to the heavy snow. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm produced unprecedented April snows in the central Appalachians. Mount Mitchell NC received 35 inches of snow, and up to 60 inches (six feet) of snow was reported in the mountains along the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. The total of 25 inches at Charleston WV easily surpassed their previous record for the entire month of April of 5.9 inches. The 20.6 inch total at Akron OH established an all-time record for that location. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)


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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
				
Chance Rain/Snow then Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Chance Showers	Slight Chance Showers
High: 45 °F	Low: 35 °F	High: 58 °F	Low: 40 °F	High: 63 °F


Today

Morning Fog, especially near the Sisseton Hills




Saturday

Morning Fog. Light showers and a few thunderstorms, especially over eastern SD



Sunday

Morning Showers, and a few thunderstorms.




WARM: 5 to 15° above normal

Highs: 55 to 70°

Highs: 57 to 72°

Highs: 56 to 67°

Looking Ahead: Expect dry weather Sunday afternoon through much of Tuesday. There is a lot of uncertainty in the forecast beyond Wednesday of next week, so stay up to date on the latest, and expect many changes between now and then.




High water remains. Turn Around, Don't Drown!

Continue to monitor water levels. Listen to the advice of local officials, and never go around flood barriers.

weather.gov/abr

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Graphic Created
4/5/2019 5:56 AM

Highs through Sunday in the mid 50s to low 70s are 5 to 15 degrees above normal for this time of year. We'll continue to see high water across the region. As a reminder, don't cross flood barriers. They are there for your safety. Turn Around, Don't Drown! Showers and even a few rumbles of thunder will return to the forecast tonight into Sunday, especially for eastern South Dakota.

Published on: 04/05/2019 at 7:00AM

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 43 °F at 4:48 PM

Low Outside Temp: 35 °F at 2:58 AM

High Gust: 18 mph at 12:19 PM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 86° in 1991

Record Low: 6° in 2007

Average High: 51°F

Average Low: 28°F

Average Precip in April.: 0.18

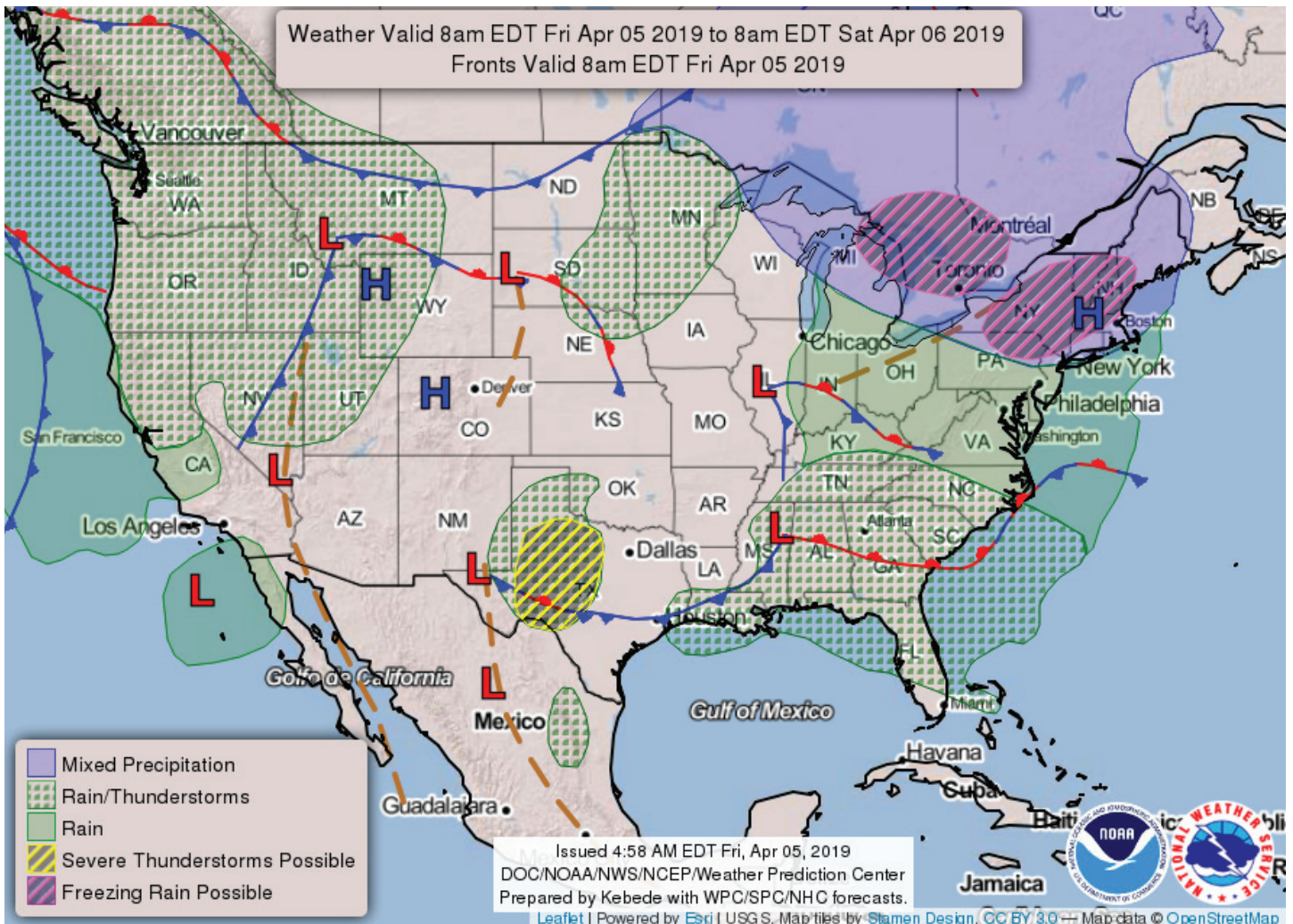
Precip to date in April.: 0.87

Average Precip to date: 2.36

Precip Year to Date: 3.06

Sunset Tonight: 8:07 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:05 a.m.



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IS THE WORD LOVE A COVER-UP?

Do you know what today is? Mary, my wife, asked.

Of course. Its Tuesday, I replied.

Well, is it anything more than Tuesday? Does it have a number and is there a month that goes with that particular number? she asked with a faint smile.

Looking at my watch, I said, Its October 24. Almost time for Halloween. And that did it.

First, came tears. Then, a few more words about forgetting important things - like birthdays. Then more tears. Not only was I embarrassed, but I was also humiliated that I forgot such an important date and event.

But, I do love you. And that should make up for it, I said, thinking of the words of Solomon: Love covers all wrong. But does it?

Love, Gods love, is the center of every relationship - beginning with loving Him. And when we learn to love Him as He loves us, it will have a preeminent place in our lives. It will be visible to all who know us - especially those in our lives that are special to us. They will be more than a name or number: they will be blest because we love them.

The love that Solomon describes here is a love that draws in and unites. It invites people into our hearts and then bonds them to us as closely as two pieces of Velcro.

We cannot use the word love as a cover when we do something wrong - as though we want the other person to feel guilty. True love, Gods love, anticipates a need long before it surfaces. It remembers the needs of others because we all have similiar needs. However, true love - Gods kind of love - reaches out to others as God reaches out to each of us.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to be sincere and honest and pure when we say, I love you! May our love match Yours, in our deeds as well as words. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 01/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 03/17/2019 Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
- 04/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/27/2019 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 05/04/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/27/2019 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program (Memorial Day)
- 06/13/2019 Transit Fundraiser (Thursday Mid-June)
- 06/14/2019 SDSU Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 06/15/2019 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 06/21/2019 Best Ball Golf Tourney
- 06/22-23/2019 Groton Junior Legion Tournament
- 06/29/2019 Groton U10/U12 Round Robin Tournament
- 07/04/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 07/14/2019 Summer Fest/Car Show (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/18/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Tournament
- 07/21/2019 Granary Ice Cream Social & Family Music Fest
- 08/02/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Wine on Nine
- 08/09-11/2019 State Junior Legion Tournament in Groton
- 08/22/2019 First Day of School
- 09/07/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/08/2019 Sunflower Classic at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/08/2019 Granary Living History Fall Festival
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2019 Trunk or Treat/Halloween on Main (Halloween)
- 11/09/2019 Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/07/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Holiday Party
- 12/07/2019 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- Bingo: every Wednesday, Labor Day-Memorial Day, 6:30pm at the Legion Post #39

2020 Groton SD Community Events

- 4/4/2020 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 4/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 5/2/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)

News from the Associated Press

Noem appoints DeVaney to seat on South Dakota Supreme Court

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem has appointed Patricia DeVaney the state Supreme Court.

DeVaney has served as a judge in South Dakota's Sixth Judicial Circuit since 2012, when she was appointed by then-Gov. Dennis Daugaard. She fills the vacancy created when Justice Steven Zinter died in October of complications from routine surgery.

The 50-year-old DeVaney graduated summa cum laude from the University of South Dakota in 1990 and later earned her law degree from the University of Virginia. She began her career in the state attorney general's office in 1993, where she worked as an appellate and trial lawyer until 2012.

Noem says DeVaney has 25 years of diverse experience in the courtroom and has a passion for public service.

Orion Food Systems and Land Mark Products Join Forces

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. and MILFORD, Iowa, April 4, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Orion Food Systems, LLC ("Orion") and Land Mark Products, Inc. ("Land Mark") today announced the signing of a definitive merger agreement to create a leading and fully comprehensive foodservice company to serve convenience store operators. Financial terms of the transaction, which is backed by an affiliate of One Rock Capital Partners, LLC ("One Rock"), were not disclosed.

Founded in 1983, Orion is a manufacturer and distributor of food products as well as a provider of foodservice solutions to the convenience and specialty retail channels worldwide. The company supplies locations in the United States and abroad with a complete portfolio of foodservice solutions from ingredients to pre-made entrees and snacks under a variety of brands, including: Hot Stuff Pizza, Gourmet Grub, Chix Chicken, CHOPZ, Paavo's Pizza, and Papa Primo's Italian Kitchen. Orion is headquartered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, with an additional facility in Kimball, Tennessee.

Land Mark is a manufacturer and distributor of pizza and sandwich solutions that has served the retail and foodservice industries since 1977. The company is a leading provider of pizza products to the convenience store industry, and has expanded its solutions into the grocery, private label, and other markets. Headquartered in Milford, Iowa, Land Mark manages the Piccadilly Circus Pizza and Day'N Night Bites brands.

"We are delighted to unite two longstanding businesses with such well-known brands in this strategic partnership," said Frank Orfanello, Chairman of the Board of Orion. "As a combined business, we will be able to offer a tailored solution to meet the needs of convenience store operators, from turnkey foodservice franchises that include equipment and post-sale consulting, to custom-designed programs for distributors."

Land Mark owners Jason Farrell and Randy Johnson will be investors in the combined entity alongside Land Mark founder Rod Simonson and One Rock. Messrs. Farrell and Johnson will also continue in their leadership roles as President and Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President of Finance and Distribution of Land Mark, respectively.

Mr. Farrell commented, "Joining forces with Orion and expanding our geographic footprint will allow us to serve as a fully comprehensive one-stop-shop for convenience store operators of all sizes and locations. We are pleased to provide a broader offering of high-quality products and foodservice solutions to more customers across more markets."

One Rock Managing Partner R. Scott Spielvogel added, "We are committed to building the leading foodservice company serving the convenience channel, and the combination of Orion and Land Mark is a significant step forward in that journey."

ABOUT ORION FOOD SYSTEMS, LLC

Orion is a manufacturer and distributor of food products and a provider of foodservice solutions to the convenience and complementary retail channels in the United States and abroad. The Company supplies

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hundreds of locations in over 40 states with a complete portfolio of foodservice solutions from ingredients to pre-made entrees and snacks. Orion is headquartered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and maintains an additional facility in Kimball, Tennessee. For more information, visit www.orionfoods.com.

ABOUT LAND MARK PRODUCTS, INC.

Land Mark Products has been operating, manufacturing and distributing pizza and sandwich solutions for the retail and foodservice industries since 1977. The company is a leading provider of pizza products to the convenience store industry, and has expanded its solutions into the grocery, private label, and other markets. Its brands include Piccadilly Circus Pizza and Day'N Night Bites, as well as private label foods for many others. For more information, visit www.lmpinc.com.

ABOUT ONE ROCK CAPITAL PARTNERS, LLC

One Rock makes controlling investments in companies with potential for growth and operational improvement using a rigorous approach that utilizes highly experienced Operating Partners to identify, acquire and enhance businesses in select industries. The involvement of these Operating Partners affords One Rock the ability to conduct due diligence and consummate acquisitions and investments in all types of situations, regardless of complexity. One Rock works collaboratively with company management and its Operating Partners to develop a comprehensive business plan focused on growing the enterprise and its profitability to enhance long-term value. For more information, visit www.onerockcapital.com.

MEDIA CONTACT

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(212) 257-4170

View original content: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/orion-food-systems-and-land-mark-products-join-forces-300825062.html>

SOURCE One Rock Capital Partners, LLC

Woman sues grocery chain Hy-Vee after automatic door injury

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota woman filed a lawsuit against grocery chain Hy-Vee, claiming she was knocked down by a store's automatic doors and suffered injuries that required surgery.

Julie Hallan's lawsuit accused Hy-Vee of breaching its duties to her as a customer by failing to adequately inspect and maintain the doors at its Brookings store, the Argus Leader reported. Hallan was returning a grocery cart inside the store when the automatic doors closed on her, leaving her with injuries to her hip and left leg, the lawsuit stated.

Hy-Vee acknowledged that Hallan was injured during her Dec. 9, 2018, visit to the store, but the chain denies negligence. Hy-Vee said it doesn't have sufficient information about the circumstances surrounding Hallan's injury.

Hallan's lawyer, Michael Marlow, has filed a motion to preserve surveillance video evidence of the incident.

The Hy-Vee store in Brookings only keeps video from the last 90 days and the tapes are only accessible to corporate management, said Max Winstead, the chain's assistant vice president of IT operations.

"The purpose of this restriction is to ensure that content is never downloaded without corporate management's knowledge, eliminating the possibility of employee misuse of security footage," Winstead said in an affidavit.

A hearing on the motion hasn't been scheduled yet.

Information from: Argus Leader, <http://www.argusleader.com>

Van recovered from James River, 1 man dead

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol says one person has died after a minivan crashed into a river near Mitchell.

The patrol says the van was headed east on 250th Avenue, veered into a ditch, smashed through a

barbed-wire fence and landed in the James River. Authorities recovered the vehicle from the river Wednesday and found the body of a 28-year-old man along the west shore. Investigators are still trying to determine when the actual crash occurred.

The patrol says the search continues for more possible occupants of the van.

Winning card finally drawn in year-long fundraiser

HUDSON, S.D. (AP) — The right card has finally been drawn to win a fundraiser jackpot that has been growing for a year in a tiny South Dakota town.

A charitable group called the Southeast Area Pink Ladies set up the "Chase the Queen" fundraiser last year in Waddy's Bar in Hudson to help people in the area who were struggling with cancer.

The Argus Leader says thousands of people were drawn to the town of about 300 to buy tickets for a chance at drawing the queen of diamonds card that would win the jackpot which had grown to about \$320,000.

A group of family and friends from Montrose had the winning ticket and sent Ryan Gordon to make the card draw Wednesday night. He picked the queen of diamonds from the three remaining cards to win the jackpot that he and 11 others will split.

Information from: Argus Leader, <http://www.argusleader.com>

5 children removed, mother accused of possessing meth

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say five children, including a 2-week-old baby, have been removed from a Sioux Falls home and their mother has been arrested after methamphetamine was found at their apartment.

Police say the 38-year-old woman is facing charges of abuse or cruelty to a minor and drug possession. Officials say they went to the home Tuesday for a welfare check after one of the older children didn't show up at school. Besides the baby, the children are ages 14, 11, 8 and 4 years old.

Police say the children were turned over to the Department of Social Services.

Japan space drops explosive on asteroid to make crater

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's space agency said an explosive dropped Friday from its Hayabusa2 spacecraft successfully blasted the surface of an asteroid for the first time to form a crater and pave the way for the collection of underground samples for possible clues to the origin of the solar system.

Friday's mission was the riskiest for Hayabusa2 because it had to immediately move away so it wouldn't get hit by flying shards from the blast.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, said Hayabusa2 dropped a small explosive box which sent a copper ball the size of a baseball slamming into the asteroid, and that data confirmed the spacecraft had safely evacuated and remained intact. JAXA later confirmed the impact from images transmitted from a camera left behind by the spacecraft which showed the impactor being released and fine particles later spraying dozens of meters (yards) out from a spot on the asteroid.

"The mission was a success," JAXA project manager Yuichi Tsuda said, beaming. "It is highly likely to have made a crater."

JAXA plans to send Hayabusa2, which was moved to the other side of the asteroid, back to the site after dust and debris settle for observations and to collect samples of material from the new crater that was unexposed to the sun or space rays. Scientists hope the samples will help them understand the history of the solar system, since asteroids are left over material from its formation.

No such samples have been recovered. In a 2005 "deep impact" mission to a comet, NASA observed fragments after blasting the surface but did not collect them.

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Last month, JAXA announced that a group of scientists participating in the Hayabusa2 mission had detected hydroxyl-bearing minerals on the asteroid by analyzing near-infrared spectrometer readings by the spacecraft. It said that could help explain where the Earth's water came from. The results were published in the online edition of Science magazine.

"So far, Hayabusa2 has done everything as planned, and we are delighted," mission leader Makoto Yoshikawa said earlier Friday. "But we still have more missions to achieve and it's too early for us to celebrate."

Hayabusa2 successfully touched down on a small level area on the boulder-strewn asteroid in February, when it also collected some surface dust and small debris. The craft is scheduled to leave the asteroid at the end of 2019 and bring the surface fragments and underground samples back to Earth in late 2020.

The asteroid, named Ryugu after an undersea palace in a Japanese folktale, is about 300 million kilometers (180 million miles) from Earth.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>

UK police outside Ecuador embassy amid WikiLeaks tweets

By ALASTAIR GRANT, GONZALO SOLANO and JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police stationed armed officers outside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London on Friday after tweets from WikiLeaks quoted what it said were high-level sources saying that Julian Assange could be kicked out of the building within "hours to days."

The red-brick embassy building with white window frames and balconies was quiet. No embassy official or any British authorities commented on the WikiLeaks founder's status.

Asked about the presence of armed officers outside the Ecuadorian Embassy, London's Metropolitan Police force said there had been no change in police procedure.

Police said in a statement there is an active warrant for Assange's arrest and that the police are "obliged to execute that warrant should he leave the Embassy."

Police withdrew the round-the-clock guard outside the embassy in October 2015 after more than three years in favor of what the service called a "covert" approach.

Assange hasn't left the embassy since August 2012, fearing if he steps off Ecuador's diplomatic soil he will be arrested and extradited to the U.S. for publishing thousands of classified military and diplomatic cables through WikiLeaks.

Ecuador's foreign ministry issued a statement late Thursday saying it wouldn't comment on what it called "rumors, theories or conjectures."

Later, a senior official told The Associated Press that no decision had been taken to expel Assange from the embassy.

A small group of protesters and supporters of WikiLeaks' founder gathered Thursday outside the London embassy. On Friday morning, a van appeared outside the building showing a placard that said "Free Speech" and featured images of Assange and convicted classified document leaker Chelsea Manning. Police moved it on.

WikiLeaks on Thursday tweeted: "BREAKING: A high level source within the Ecuadorian state has told @WikiLeaks that Julian Assange will be expelled within "hours to days" using the #INAPapers offshore scandal as a pretext--and that it already has an agreement with the UK for his arrest."

Another tweet said it had received a secondary confirmation from another high-level source.

But a top official said while Ecuadorian President Lenín Moreno was angered by the apparent hacking of his personal communications, he denied WikiLeaks' claim and said no decision had been taken to expel Assange from the Embassy. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the matter.

On Tuesday, Moreno blamed WikiLeaks for recent allegations of offshore corruption that in appeared in local media outlets and the publication of family photos to social media.

Moreno accused WikiLeaks of intercepting phone calls and private conversations as well as "photos of

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my bedroom, what I eat, and how my wife and daughters and friends dance.”

Moreno provided no evidence, but the speech reflected ongoing tension between Assange and his hosts at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London.

WikiLeaks in a statement called Moreno’s charges “completely bogus,” saying it reported on the accusations of corruption against the president only after Ecuador’s legislature investigated the issue.

Assange’s defense team suggested on Twitter that Moreno was trying to use the scandal to pressure the WikiLeaks founder.

Gonzalo Solano reported from Quito, Ecuador and Joshua Goodman reported from Bogota, Colombia. Barry Hatton contributed from Lisbon, Portugal.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. WHO’S BACKING OFF BORDER SHUTDOWN

President Donald Trump backed off his threat to seal the southern border and warned instead to slap Mexico with auto tariffs.

2. BIDEN TO MAKE 1ST APPEARANCE SINCE COMPLAINTS ABOUT HIS BEHAVIOR

Former Vice President Joe Biden is set to make his first public appearance since a handful of women came forward to say his affectionate behavior made them uneasy in the past.

3. UK PM ASK EU FOR BREXIT EXTENSION UNTIL JUNE 30

British Prime Minister Theresa May is requesting that the deadline for her country to leave the European Union be extended until June 30.

4. MAN’S CLAIM GIVES FALSE HOPE IN MISSING BOY CASE

The FBI declared the man’s story a hoax one day after he identified himself to authorities as Timmothy Pitzen, who disappeared in 2011 at age 6.

5. ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES JET’S FINAL JOURNEY

A preliminary report by Ethiopian investigators on the March crash that killed 157 people reveals a minute-by-minute narrative of the gripping and confusing scene in the cockpit.

6. NETANYAHU PLAYS A ‘TRUMP CARD’ IN RE-ELECTION BID

The Israeli leader’s campaign speeches, billboards and social media videos have all heavily featured Trump’s image, statements and pro-Israel actions as endorsements in a tight race for re-election.

7. BARR DEFENDS HANDLING OF MUELLER REPORT

Attorney General William Barr says special counsel Robert Mueller’s report on the Russia investigation contains sensitive grand jury material preventing it from being immediately released.

8. WHY VENEZUELA CHILDREN ON THE MOVE NEED HELP

About 1.1 million children will need access to services such as education, sanitation and safe drinking water across the region this year because of the Venezuelan migrant crisis, UNICEF report says.

9. ECUADOR DENIES DECISION MADE TO EXPEL ASSANGE

A senior Ecuadorian official says no decision has been made to expel Julian Assange from the country’s London embassy despite tweets from WikiLeaks that sources told it he could be kicked out within “hours to days.”

10. BUCKS CLINCH TOP SEED IN EAST AND NBA

Giannis Antetokounmpo outdueled fellow MVP candidate Joel Embiid, finishing with 45 points and 13 rebounds as the Bucks clinched the top spot in the conference and the top overall seed in the upcoming playoffs.

EU urges Brexit 'flexextension' as UK pursues shorter delay

By GREGORY KATZ and RAF CASERT Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Theresa May Friday sought to delay Brexit until June 30 to avoid a crash-out in one week's time, but a key European Union leader suggested an even longer pause in the difficult divorce proceedings.

In a letter to European Council President Donald Tusk, May seeks an extension until June 30 and agreed to make contingency plans to take part in European Parliament elections in late May if necessary.

Tusk proposed a longer time frame. He urged the 27 remaining EU nations to offer the U.K. a flexible extension of up to a year to make sure the nation doesn't leave the bloc in a chaotic and costly way.

Two EU officials, who requested anonymity because they weren't authorized to disclose information before it was made public, said that Tusk wants a one-year "flexextension" and hopes to get it approved at next Wednesday's EU summit.

Such a move would mean that the U.K. needs to take part in the May 23 to May 26 European elections, something which the U.K. prime minister has long argued would not be in either side's interest.

The elections pose a substantial stumbling block because Britain would be expected to take part, if it is still an EU member, so its people have representation in the European Parliament. Officials worry the legitimacy of European institutions could be jeopardized if the population of a member state is not involved in the process.

Any extension to the deadline will need unanimous approval from the 27 remaining EU nations. French President Emmanuel Macron has thus far seemed cautious about giving Britain more time, saying the EU cannot be held hostage by Britain's political deadlock over Brexit.

If any EU nation refuses to back an extension, Britain will be expected to leave as scheduled on April 12. The complex maneuvering comes as Britain's Parliament considers legislation designed to prevent such a "no-deal" departure.

There are concerns that an abrupt exit without an agreed withdrawal deal could lead to economic slow-down and a breakdown in food and medical supplies as border checks and tariffs are added overnight.

Massive traffic jams would also be expected on highways leading to major ferry ports as previously open borders were tightened with more identity and passport checks.

Britain's upper House of Lords is set to resume debate on the measure Monday. It was endorsed earlier by the lower House of Commons by just one vote.

Despite the apparent support in Parliament for a new law to prevent a no-deal exit, the decision is in the EU's hands, not Britain's. Britain is the first country to try to leave the EU bloc, and the formal "Article 50" exit procedure has never been tested before.

EU leaders agreed late last month to prolong the Brexit date from March 29 until April 12, unless May could push their mutually agreed divorce deal through Parliament.

The Europeans would prefer that Britain don't take part in the European Parliament elections if it is going to leave. April 12 is the last day for Britain to signal whether it will field candidates.

May said in her letter that Britain is reluctantly ready to begin preparations for the European elections if no Brexit deal is reached in the interim.

She said she is making these preparations even though she believes it is not in Britain's interest or the EU's interest for Britain to take part in the elections because it is a departing member state.

May says she "accepts" the EU position that if Britain has not left the 28-nation bloc by May 23 it will have a legal obligation to take part in the elections.

The prime minister says she is still hopeful of reaching a compromise agreement that could take Britain out of the EU before that time.

May says it is "frustrating" that Britain hasn't yet resolved the situation. Her withdrawal plan, agreed with the EU over more than two years of delicate negotiations, has been rejected by Parliament three times, leading to the current political and legal impasse.

She is now seeking a compromise in a series of talks with Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and his deputies with hopes of winning opposition backing for a new divorce plans.

If that doesn't work, May plans a series of votes in Parliament to see if a majority-backed plan can emerge. Ideas being discussed include keeping Britain in a customs union with the EU after it leaves the bloc, as well as the possibility of a second referendum.

There is fierce opposition from Conservative Party Brexit-backer to these options. Britain voted by a 52% to 48% margin in 2016 to leave the bloc.

Raf Casert reported from Brussels. Lorne Cook contributed from Brussels.

Attorney general defends handling of Mueller's Russia report

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General William Barr is defending his handling of special counsel Robert Mueller's report on the Russia investigation, saying the confidential document contains sensitive grand jury material that prevented it from being immediately released to the public.

The statement Thursday came as Barr confronts concerns that his four-page letter summarizing Mueller's conclusions unduly sanitized the full report in President Donald Trump's favor, including on the key question of whether the president obstructed justice. House Democrats on Wednesday approved subpoenas for Mueller's entire report and any exhibits and other underlying evidence that the Justice Department might withhold.

The disparity in length between Barr's letter and Mueller's full report, which totals nearly 400 pages, raises the likelihood of additional significant information that was put forward by the special counsel's office but not immediately shared by the attorney general.

In Thursday's statement, Barr defended the decision to release a brief summary letter two days after receiving the report on March 22. He has previously said he did not believe it would be in the public's interest to release the full document in piecemeal or gradual fashion, and that he did not intend for his letter summarizing Mueller's "principal conclusions" to be an "exhaustive recounting" of the special counsel's investigation.

Barr is now expected to release the entire report, with redactions, by mid-April.

"Given the extraordinary public interest in the matter, the Attorney General decided to release the report's bottom-line findings and his conclusions immediately — without attempting to summarize the report — with the understanding that the report itself would be released after the redaction process," the Justice Department statement said.

The statement also said that every page of Mueller's report was marked that it may contain grand jury material "and therefore could not immediately be released."

A Justice Department official, speaking Thursday on condition of anonymity to discuss a confidential process, said summaries of the findings that Mueller's team included as part of its report also contained grand jury information, making it hard for a swift release.

Barr has said that while Mueller did not establish a criminal conspiracy between Russia and the Trump campaign, the special counsel left open a decision on whether the president had tried to obstruct the Russia investigation. The Mueller team laid out evidence on both sides of the question in a way that neither established a crime nor exonerated Trump, according to Barr's letter.

Barr has said that he and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein determined that Mueller's evidence was insufficient to support an obstruction allegation.

Barr said he was continuing to work with Mueller's office on redactions to the report so that it could be released to Congress and the public.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

Biden to make 1st appearance since complaints about behavior

By JULIE PACE and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In countless conversations over the past year, former Vice President Joe Biden, his advisers and his broad network of friends and family have openly discussed the vulnerabilities he would face if he ran for president. A voting record that is sometimes at odds with the Democratic Party's leftward shift. His age. And the affectionate brand of politics that has made him beloved by many Democrats and a target of Republicans for years.

What Biden likely didn't expect was to be confronting those issues so fully before even launching a campaign.

On Friday, Biden will make his first public appearance since several women began recounting encounters with him that left them uneasy. The first was Nevada politician Lucy Flores, who said she was uncomfortable when Biden kissed her on the back of the head backstage at a 2014 campaign event. Her account was countered by scores of women — from prominent lawmakers to former Biden staffers — who praised him as a warm, affectionate person and a supportive boss.

It's unclear whether he will address the situation in his remarks to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. He said in a cellphone video released Wednesday that he understood "social norms have begun to change" and "the boundaries of protecting personal space have been reset."

Biden allies insist the eruption has done little to slow down planning for a 2020 campaign. Barring the unforeseen, he is expected to announce his candidacy, perhaps online, after Easter and immediately embark on a trip to early voting caucus and primary states. Those stops would be followed by a ceremonial kickoff.

Advisers say they are working to build out a robust campaign staff, including operatives in Iowa and South Carolina, states that are seen as key to his path to the nomination. Women are being considered for key roles, including senior strategist and deputy campaign manager, according to advisers, who insisted on anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the planning publicly.

Biden's sister, Valerie Biden Owens, has long been one of his most trusted political confidantes. His daughter, 37-year-old Ashley Biden, who has largely kept a low profile during his political career, may also take on a more prominent role. She has quit her job as a social worker, fueling speculation.

But the past few weeks have laid bare the challenges Biden would face. Some women's groups have balked at his attempts to apologize for his role overseeing the Senate hearings in which Anita Hill accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment. UltraViolet, the women's advocacy organization, said its message to Biden was "Do better. Do better for women."

Biden was also broadly panned following reports that he was considering asking 2018 Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams, a 45-year-old African American woman, to be his running mate during the Democratic primaries. Abrams herself brushed back the speculation by saying she thought a woman or a minority would be the Democratic Party nominee in 2020.

Speaking to MSNBC on Thursday, Abrams offered support for Biden and said Democrats shouldn't "have perfection as a litmus test." But in a sign of the volatility that could be ahead for the Democratic field, Abrams said she doesn't expect to decide whether to launch a presidential bid of her own until the fall, just months before primary voting begins.

The rush of attention on Biden's behavior with women has been particularly intense, raising questions about whether his hugs and shoulder squeezes are simply out of a different era or a new front in the MeToo movement that has put a spotlight on the actions of powerful men.

"It feels so much like some of the other Me Too stuff that's been floating around, that I'm afraid he might get tarred with that brush whether or not it's really warranted," said Mike Waggoner, a 70-year-old Democrat from Waterloo, Iowa. "This is such a sensitive area and an important area, I'm afraid it could just take him out."

As the scrutiny has intensified, Biden has kept the counsel of a small group of advisers who have been with him for years. The team appeared to respond slowly to Flores' assertions, first releasing a brief statement from a spokesman, then a longer statement from Biden himself about 36 hours later. Four more

days passed before the former vice president's video response was released.

"It is a really difficult period before you announce when you are nonetheless a target," Axelrod said. "You're not wholly in a position to respond and yet you have to, and so that may account for the halting way in which this unfolded."

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. AP writer Alexandra Jaffe in Waterloo, Iowa, contributed to this report.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC> and Thomas Beaumont at <http://twitter.com/tombeaumont>.

Netanyahu plays a 'Trump card' as Israeli elections near

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — In a tight race for re-election, Israel's prime minister has gotten a welcome lift from his friend in the White House.

Benjamin Netanyahu's campaign speeches, billboards and social media videos have all heavily featured President Donald Trump's image, statements and pro-Israel actions as endorsements of the long-seated prime minister.

Drawing inspiration from Trump, Netanyahu has dismissed a corruption case against him as a "witch hunt" and his Likud party has launched a weekly webcast to counter what it claims is "fake news" broadcast by mainstream media.

For Netanyahu, the close ties with Trump are a welcome change after eight frosty years with the Obama administration, which repeatedly clashed with the prime minister over his policies toward the Palestinians and his opposition to the nuclear agreement with Iran.

Upon taking office two years ago, Trump quickly reversed course and established a tight relationship with Netanyahu. This has yielded benefits for Netanyahu on the campaign trail.

In the run-up to Tuesday's vote, Netanyahu has hosted Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, visited Trump in the White House and received American recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which Israel seized from Syria during the 1967 Mideast war.

Those moves are seen as an unspoken U.S. endorsement of Netanyahu, and in Israel, having close ties with whoever occupies the White House is seen as a major asset.

Trump enjoys strong support among Israelis, 69% of whom expressed confidence in the president's ability "to do the right thing regarding world affairs," according to a Pew Research Center poll published in October.

That support largely springs from Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the opening of the U.S. Embassy there. Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and his decision to slash U.S. aid to the Palestinians are also popular among Israelis.

A YouTube ad published April 1 strings together Trump statements from recent years extolling Netanyahu's leadership as a "great prime minister."

"Benjamin Netanyahu, there's nobody like him," Trump says in a clip taken from a 2013 video. Building-sized billboards in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv show the two leaders shaking hands.

A poll conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute found that 63% of Israelis "believe that Netanyahu's standing in the current election campaign will be strengthened by the U.S. recognition" of the annexation of the Golan Heights. The survey interviewed 603 people and had a margin of error of 4.1 percentage points.

While the gambit has played well domestically, Netanyahu's close ties with Trump risk undermining bipartisan support for Israel among Americans, and Israel's relationship with traditionally liberal American Jews.

More than 70 percent of American Jews voted against Trump, and many express unease about U.S.-Israel relations becoming too closely associated with the friendship between two polarizing leaders.

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The April 9 election is widely seen as a referendum on Netanyahu's decade-long rule, and his campaign is using the relationship with Trump to portray him as a respected statesman with personal ties to world leaders.

In an Instagram video posted Wednesday, Netanyahu touts his administration's "unprecedented diplomatic advancements," foremost among them "strengthening relations with the United States," but also closer ties with Russia, China, India, Japan and Brazil.

On Thursday, Netanyahu paid a surprise visit to Russia, where President Vladimir Putin announced his country's instrumental role in recovering the remains of an Israeli soldier who went missing in action in Lebanon in 1982.

The return of the soldier's remains, along with a visit this week by Brazil's president, Jair Bolsonaro, has given Netanyahu another diplomatic victory late in the campaign.

Netanyahu seeks a fourth consecutive term in office as Israel's leader. If re-elected, he will become the country's longest serving prime minister, outstripping its founding father, David Ben Gurion. The prime minister's campaign has steamed ahead despite Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit's recommendation last month that Netanyahu be indicted for a series of corruption charges.

With less than a week to go, opinion polls give Netanyahu a slight edge in the race. But he faces major opposition from his former army chief of staff, Benny Gantz.

Sounding much like Trump, Netanyahu has attacked the press, branded Gantz and other opponents as "leftists" and questioned Gantz's mental health.

A video released by Netanyahu in late March said members of Gantz's party signed a petition to boycott a 2015 meeting with Trump, "the president who moved the embassy to Jerusalem, recognized the Golan Heights as Israeli territory, and left the nuclear agreement with Iran. Shame!"

Gantz is running along with two other former army chiefs of staff, which gives their Blue and White party security chops to rival those of Netanyahu.

Reuven Hazan, a political scientist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said the Blue and White party's unassailable military credentials have forced Netanyahu to stump on his foreign policy accomplishments rather than in his traditional role as "Mr. Security."

"We are a tiny, tiny country but our leader is on very good terms with the president of the United States, the president of Russia, and the president of Brazil," Hazan said. "In other words, he's using his relative advantage to say 'if you don't elect me, whoever replaces me will not be able to play in the international league that I have raised Israel to and we will drop significantly,'" Hazan said.

Follow Ilan Ben Zion on Twitter at www.twitter.com/IlanBenZion

Trump backs off border shutdown but threatens auto tariffs

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Abandoning his threat to immediately seal the southern border, President Donald Trump warned instead on Thursday that he'd slap tariffs on cars coming to the U.S. from Mexico unless the Mexicans do more to stop the flow of migrants and drugs to the U.S.

In his latest backtrack in recent days, Trump told reporters he would try the "less drastic measure" before resorting to his standing border-closure threat.

"Mexico understands that we're going to close the border or I'm going to tariff the cars. I'll do one or the other. And probably start off with the tariffs," Trump said. He added later: "I don't think we'll ever have to close the border because the penalty of tariffs on cars coming into the United States from Mexico, at 25 percent, will be massive."

It was the latest, seemingly sudden attempt at new leverage by a president struggling to solve what his administration has called a border "crisis." And it was a dramatic departure for Trump, who last week tweeted that he would close the border or large swaths of it this week unless Mexico immediately halted "ALL illegal immigration coming into the United States" — a seemingly impossible task.

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Trump said at the time that he was "not kidding around," and his acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney said in a television interview Sunday that it would take "something dramatic" for Trump not to close down the crossings.

Since then, however, White House advisers, border city leaders and U.S. economists have warned that such a move would have enormous economic consequences on both sides of the border, interrupting supply chains and boosting U.S. consumer prices on everything from avocados to autos.

Trump in recent days has also backtracked on his push for Republicans to again take on health care and surprised his own education secretary by reversing a plan to ax federal aid for the Special Olympics.

Those actions have only added to longstanding concerns about whether Trump's words can be trusted. Trump, who has long said his unpredictability is one of his greatest negotiating assets, has also followed through with some of his most bombastic threats, including forcing the country's longest-ever government shutdown over border funding.

Trump had already appeared to be easing off his border threat earlier this week. Though he said Tuesday all options remained on the table, he shifted his goal posts, calling on Congress to pass immigration legislation to avert a closure and praising the Mexican government for doing more to apprehend migrants traveling through the country from Central America — though it's unclear anything has changed.

Marcelo Ebrard, Mexico's foreign relations secretary, said Tuesday his government had not changed its policies. And on Thursday, Mexico's ambassador to the U.S. Martha Barcena told The Associated Press the country was working to make its own border "more orderly" but "migration will never be stopped."

Jesus Seade, the Mexican undersecretary for North America, also brushed off the threat of new tariffs, saying officials were "not concerned" and noting the tariffs are not part of the United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement that the countries have agreed to but not yet ratified.

On Thursday, Trump also threatened tariffs if Mexico doesn't halt the flow of illegal drugs across the border, saying he'd give the country "a one year warning" to comply.

"But if in a year from now drugs continue to pour in, we're going to put tariffs on," he said, adding: "I don't play games."

As for concerns his actions might interfere with the trade deal he fought for, Trump said the border was "more important to me than the USMCA."

Trump has wide-ranging power to impose tariffs on national security grounds, which he has repeatedly used as leverage against other countries. But the USMCA was worded to protect Mexico against auto tariffs based on national security concerns, and trade lawyer Daniel D. Ujczko said those provisions are already in effect under a side letter.

"In short, this is the exact scenario that the Mexican negotiating team predicted and secured protections from in the USMCA," he said. "Mexico 'Trump-and-Tweet-proofed' its auto sector," and the White House "would need to get very creative to impose auto tariffs on Mexico."

In addition, despite what Trump suggests, Mexico, China and other American trading partners don't pay U.S. tariffs directly. American importers pay the tariffs at the border and then must decide how much of the higher cost they can pass along to U.S. customers.

Tariffs do squeeze the manufacturers who export to the U.S. from foreign countries by making their products more expensive in the United States. But there again, that can hit U.S. companies, such as General Motors, which is a major car-maker in Mexico.

Trump has been increasingly exasperated at his inability to halt the swelling number of migrants entering the U.S., including thousands who have been released after arriving because border officials have no space for them. Arrests along the southern border have skyrocketed in recent months and border agents were on track to make 100,000 arrests or denials of entry in March, a 12-year high. More than half of those are families with children, who require extra care.

The president's "pretty frustrated," said Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, who spoke with Trump this week and offered to work with the administration "to try to come up with some more targeted ideas," including changes for remittances to Mexico. Trump suggested he work with the Treasury secretary on

the idea, Cornyn said.

Trump has invoked other executive powers, including declaring a national emergency in an effort to secure more money for his long-promised border wall. Congress voted to block the emergency declaration, but Trump vetoed that measure.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Thursday that Democrats would file a lawsuit aimed at preventing Trump from "stealing" billions from federal programs and diverting the money to building barriers along the border.

Administration officials had been studying ways to minimize the economic impact of a potential border closure in case Trump went through with his threat, including keeping trucking lanes open or closing only certain ports.

But even absent that extraordinary step, delays at border stations have been mounting after some 2,000 border officers were reassigned from checking vehicles to deal with migrant crowds.

Associated Press writers Paul Wiseman, Darlene Superville and Luis Alonso Lugo in Washington and Peter Orsi in Mexico City contributed to this report.

Family of missing boy was elated, then devastated by hoax

By CARRIE ANTLFINGER and DON BABWIN Associated Press

AURORA, Ill. (AP) — Eight years after an Illinois boy disappeared, his family began to think that their nightmare might be over at last.

A young man found wandering the streets of a Kentucky town claimed he had just escaped from two men in the Cincinnati area who held him captive for seven years. And he told police his name was Timothy Pitzen. It didn't seem possible that someone so far away could make up such a story. So for a day and a half, relatives waited and hoped for a breakthrough.

Then on Thursday came devastating word from the FBI: DNA tests showed that the person was not Timothy, a boy from Aurora who vanished at age 6 in 2011, around the time of his mother's suicide.

"It's like reliving that day all over again, and Timothy's father is devastated once again, as are we," said the boy's aunt Kara Jacobs, her voice choked with emotion.

Authorities said the person claiming to be 14-year-old Timothy was actually a 23-year-old ex-convict who was recently released from an Ohio prison after serving time for burglary and vandalism.

Neither Jacobs nor the boy's grandmother Alana Anderson tried to hide their disappointment as they struggled for composure during a brief news conference outside Anderson's home in Antioch, about 60 miles north of Aurora.

Anderson said her prayer has always been that when Timothy was old enough, "he would find us if we couldn't find him." She held out hope that if he's "in a place where he has communication with the media or a computer, that he'll remember us enough to look for us, and I think he will. He's a very smart guy."

The rest of Aurora seemed to share in the family's disappointment.

"I know the community won't give up that he is out there," said Nick Baughman, former principal at the school where Amy Fry-Pitzen took her 6-year-old son out of his kindergarten class on May 11, 2011, saying something about a family emergency.

Wearing his backpack, Timothy waved to his classmates, saying "See you tomorrow," teacher Cheryl Broach recalled.

The two climbed into Fry-Pitzen's SUV and went on an adventure that included a visit to the Brookfield Zoo outside Chicago, a suburban Chicago resort and another resort in the Wisconsin Dells, a region that calls itself the "Waterpark Capital of the World."

The next day, according to video footage released later by police, the boy and his mother were seen leaving the Kalahari Resorts in the Dells. That was the last time the two were seen together. When Fry-Pitzen checked into a motel in Rockford, Illinois, about 120 miles away, on May 13, she was alone, according to police.

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The next afternoon, her body turned up but with no sign of her son. A note she left said the boy was being cared for by someone who loved him in a place where he would never be found.

In the first days of the search, police said they found a significant amount of blood in the SUV's back seat, and tests confirmed it was the boy's. That news initially terrified Anderson, but the boy's father explained that his son had a history of nosebleeds and had suffered a serious one just days before he disappeared.

At Greenman Elementary, classmates, teachers and parents tried to help by tying hundreds of yellow ribbons around trees and signs. A garden was planted in Timmothy's memory.

"There were a lot of prayers, I recall," Baughman said Thursday. "It was just one of those moments where you want to maintain hope and be supportive."

Police tried to piece together the route Fry-Pitzen might have taken in her SUV, but in the years that followed, authorities never offered a public explanation for her actions. Reported sightings of the boy went nowhere. Investigators became frustrated by what they called hoaxes.

Family members knew that Fry-Pitzen had been troubled. A woman who was close to the family and whose children played with Timmothy said she noticed something amiss the morning he was taken out of school.

"I got to see him that morning before everything happened," Linda Ramirez remembered. "She seemed very sad. I was in a hurry and I didn't stop. I just went to work. I thought I can come over later and talk to her."

"I would love to see him again and hold him, and say that I'm sorry that I didn't stop," Ramirez added. "Believe it or not, his mother loved him very, very much."

When Fry-Pitzen died, she was on her fourth marriage, Anderson said. Her daughter had battled depression for years and was taking medication.

"She and her husband were having problems," Anderson said. "We were very concerned and told her we would help her any way we could."

In 2003, according to an account James Pitzen gave to CNN, his wife "had taken some pills, I guess, and (had been) sitting on the edge of a cliff and supposedly passed out and fell off a cliff."

James Pitzen, who could not be reached for comment Thursday, ultimately moved back to Iowa, Anderson said. After a while, the flood of calls between him and his wife's family slowed to a trickle before stopping altogether.

"He went on with his life," Anderson said. "I think seeing us was upsetting to him."

If there were troubles at home, they weren't obvious in the behavior of young Timmothy. He often played with her children and enjoyed their backyard trampoline. He loved to learn and talked about learning Spanish.

"He was a very happy boy with a lot of energy," Ramirez said. "It was hard to keep up with him."

Babwin reported from Chicago. Associated Press writer Corey Williams in Detroit also contributed to this report.

States move to legalize CBD to end confusion over US rules

By PAUL ELIAS Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — CBD oil-infused gummy bears, lattes and other food, drinks and dietary supplements are selling quickly even though the U.S. government says they're illegal and local authorities have forced some retailers to pull products. The confusion has the nation's two largest states and others moving to legalize the cannabis compound that many see as beneficial to their health.

Lawmakers in Texas and California are often in opposition, but they're both pushing bipartisan legislation to sidestep federal law and allow sales of the compound found in hemp and marijuana. Republicans and Democrats in Congress also are urging the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to change its stance.

The FDA announced Tuesday that it will hold a public hearing in May to gather more information.

Resolving the confusion can't come quick enough for Jonathan Eppers, who makes Vybes, a popular

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CBD oil-infused beverage. California health inspectors raided his Los Angeles warehouse in January and impounded \$100,000 worth of the drink.

Eppers said about 50 California retailers have since dropped his product and he's moved production to Texas. He estimates lost sales, legal costs and relocation expenses have cost him at least \$500,000.

"What is going on is unbelievable and asinine," Eppers said. "They put us in this state of limbo that's costing us."

Eppers and CBD fans are mystified by the legal insecurity. After all, they say, retailers in California and nine other states that have broadly legalized marijuana sell edibles and other products that get people high, though pot is illegal under federal law. U.S. officials generally have taken a hands-off approach in states where pot is legal.

The FDA has oversight of CBD because it is the active ingredient in an approved prescription drug to treat two rare seizure disorders. The agency says CBD can't be added to food or sold as a dietary supplement because officials haven't determined if it's safe or effective for other conditions.

FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb told Congress last week that enforcement is being limited to sellers who make false health claims. He says the agency recently sent warning letters to three companies touting CBD as a treatment for cancer, Alzheimer's disease, fibromyalgia and drug addiction.

"But there are products on the market right now that, given our enforcement priorities and our limited resources, we haven't taken action against," he said.

Short for cannabidiol, CBD is a non-intoxicating molecule found in hemp and marijuana. Both are cannabis plants, but only marijuana has enough of the compound THC to get users high.

CBD oil is extracted when the plant is processed. While hemp derivatives are essentially THC-free, CBD oil from marijuana may have very little or enough to produce a high.

Sellers and users say CBD helps with pain, anxiety and inflammation, though limited scientific research supports those claims. It's turning up in products ranging from lotions, cosmetics and soap to diet pills, juices, cocktails, candy and drinks.

State and local officials are taking nearly all the enforcement actions against CBD. Health officials in California, which has the nation's largest legal marijuana marketplace, warned retailers last summer that anything edible containing CBD is illegal until lawmakers or regulators say otherwise.

The warning was largely ignored until earlier this year, when state and local health officials began forcing some small businesses to pull products after receiving complaints.

San Francisco health officials recently barred two small operators from selling CBD-infused food and drink, while authorities in rural Grass Valley, 140 miles (308 kilometers) away, did the same to a small, cooperatively owned grocery store.

"It caught us way off guard," said Gus Dabais, owner of Sidewalk Wellness, one of the stores targeted.

The San Francisco Health Department sent warning letters to 1,900 businesses last year, spokeswoman Veronica Vien said. She said inspectors are not looking for CBD but responding to complaints.

She said that's how they ended up "red tagging" products at Dabais' business and Steap Tea Bar, a popular Chinatown stop that sold CBD-infused bubble tea.

Similar scenarios are playing out in Ohio, where authorities in January ordered a Cincinnati grocery store to remove CBD from two outlets. The following month, New York City health inspectors removed CBD products from a number of restaurants. Police in March raided two Fort Worth, Texas, retailers and seized CBD products after the local district attorney declared the compound illegal.

In Texas, one of a handful of states that outlaws all forms of marijuana, lawmakers are pushing a measure that would legalize hemp oil-infused edibles. It sailed through its first committee in the House this week.

In California, a similar CBD measure has moved on to the full Assembly.

"A number of people have been using it for years, and you can find it on retail shelves all over the place, but now people are surprised to find it's against the law," said Assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, a Napa-area Democrat who introduced the measure. "What this bill will do is clear up the confusion."

She said the legislation would stop state and local enforcement of the FDA's ban and hopes it becomes law by August.

"This would lift a legal cloud from a legitimate California business," said Jim Gross of the U.S. Hemp Roundtable, an industry association.

A growing number of federal lawmakers, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, are urging the FDA to approve CBD. They backed a measure taking hemp off the U.S. government's list of banned substances.

"Hemp is a versatile crop with many uses and applications," McConnell and Wyden wrote to the FDA in February. "We are hopeful that by working with you on the implementation of our legislation, we can help ensure that hemp can be a new cash crop for farmers across the country."

Man's claim gives false hope in yearslong missing boy case

By **DAN SEWELL** and **DON BABWIN** Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — A day of false hope has given way to questions about why a man would claim to be an Illinois boy who disappeared eight years ago.

The FBI declared the man's story a hoax Thursday one day after he identified himself to authorities as Timmothy Pitzen, who disappeared in 2011 at age 6.

Newport Police Chief Tom Collins identified the man to ABC as 23-year-old ex-convict Brian Rini of Medina, Ohio, who was released from prison less than a month ago after serving more than a year for burglary and vandalism.

The man was found Wednesday wandering the streets of Newport, Kentucky. He identified himself to authorities as Timmothy and said he had escaped from two men who held him captive for seven years.

But the FBI said DNA testing proved his story false, dashing hopes that the baffling disappearance of Timmothy had finally been solved.

Timmothy vanished after his mother, Amy Fry-Pitzen, pulled him out of kindergarten early one day, took him on a two-day road trip to the zoo and a water park, and then killed herself at a hotel. She left a note saying that her son was safe with people who would love and care for him, and added: "You will never find him."

Timmothy's family was cautiously hopeful over Wednesday's news, as were neighbors and others who have long wondered whether he is dead or alive.

Authorities did not say whether Rini would face charges over the alleged hoax or what his motive was.

"Law enforcement has not and will not forget Timmothy, and we hope to one day reunite him with his family. Unfortunately, that day will not be today," FBI spokesman Timothy Beam said in a statement Thursday.

In Timmothy's hometown of Aurora, Illinois, police Sgt. Bill Rowley said that over the years his department has received thousands of tips about Timmothy, including false sightings.

"We're always worried about copycats, especially something that has a big national attention like this," he said.

Timmothy's family members said they were heartbroken at the latest twist.

"It's devastating. It's like reliving that day all over again, and Timmothy's father is devastated once again," said his aunt Kara Jacobs.

The boy's grandmother Alana Anderson said: "It's been awful. We've been on tenterhooks, hopeful and frightened. It's just been exhausting." She added, "I feel so sorry for the young man who's obviously had a horrible time and felt the need to say he was somebody else."

Babwin reported from Chicago. Associated Press reporters Carrie Antlfinger in Aurora, Caryn Rousseau in Chicago and Corey Williams in Detroit contributed.

Follow Dan Sewell at <https://www.twitter.com/dansewell>

New Zealand mosque suspect to undergo mental health check

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (AP) — A New Zealand judge on Friday ordered that the man accused of killing 50 people at two Christchurch mosques undergo two mental health assessments to determine if he's fit to stand trial.

High Court judge Cameron Mander made the order during a hearing in which 28-year-old Australian Brenton Harrison Tarrant appeared via video link from a small room at the maximum security Paremoremo prison in Auckland.

Mander said nothing should be read into his order for the mental health assessments, as it was a normal step in such a case. Lawyers said it could take two or three months to complete.

The judge said Tarrant was charged with 50 counts of murder and 39 counts of attempted murder. Police initially filed a single, representative murder charge before filing the additional charges this week.

Tarrant was wearing handcuffs and a gray-colored sweater when he appeared on a large screen inside the Christchurch courtroom, which was packed with family members and victims of the shooting, some in wheelchairs and hospital gowns and still recovering from gunshot wounds.

Tarrant had stubble and close-cropped hair. He showed no emotion during the hearing. At times he looked around the room or cocked his head, seemingly to better hear what was being said. The judge explained that from his end, Tarrant could see the judge and lawyers but not those in the public gallery.

Tarrant spoke only once to confirm to the judge he was seated, although his voice didn't come through because the sound was muted. It wasn't immediately clear if his link had been deliberately or inadvertently muted.

The courtroom was filled with more than two dozen reporters and about 60 members of the public. A court registrar greeted people in Arabic and English as the hearing got underway. Some of those watching got emotional and wept.

In the March 15 attacks, 42 people were killed at the Al Noor mosque, seven were killed at the Linwood mosque and one more person died later.

The day after the attacks, Tarrant dismissed an appointed lawyer, saying he wanted to represent himself. But he has now hired two Auckland lawyers to represent him, Shane Tait and Jonathan Hudson. The next court hearing was scheduled for June 14, and the mental health findings would determine whether he is required to enter a plea then.

Outside the courtroom, Yama Nabi, whose father died in the attacks, said he felt helpless watching.

"We just have to sit in the court and listen," Nabi said. "What can we do? We can't do nothing. Just leave it to the justice of New Zealand and the prime minister."

Tofazzal Alam, 25, said he was worshipping at the Linwood mosque when the gunman attacked. He felt it was important to attend the hearing because so many of his friends were killed.

Alam said he felt upset seeing Tarrant.

"It seems he don't care what has been done. He has no emotion. He looks all right," Alam said. "I feel sorry. Sorry for myself. Sorry for my friends who have been killed. And for him."

Gone in 6 minutes: an Ethiopian Airlines jet's final journey

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

From nearly the moment they roared down the runway and took off in their new Boeing jetliner, pilots of an Ethiopian Airlines flight encountered problems with the plane.

Almost immediately, a device called a stick shaker began vibrating the captain's control column, warning him that the plane might be about to stall and fall from the sky.

For six minutes, the pilots were bombarded by alarms as they fought to fly the plane, at times pulling back in unison on their control columns in a desperate attempt to keep the huge jet aloft.

Ethiopian authorities issued a preliminary report Thursday on the March 10 crash that killed 157 people.

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They found that a malfunctioning sensor sent faulty data to the Boeing 737 Max 8's anti-stall system and triggered a chain of events that ended in a crash so violent it reduced the plane to shards and pieces. The pilots' struggle, and the tragic ending, mirrored an Oct. 29 crash of a Lion Air Max 8 off the coast of Indonesia, which killed 189 people.

The anti-stall system, called MCAS, automatically lowers the plane's nose under some circumstances to prevent an aerodynamic stall. Boeing acknowledged that a sensor in the Ethiopian Airlines jet malfunctioned, triggering MCAS when it was not needed. The company repeated that it is working on a software upgrade to fix the problem in its best-selling plane.

"It's our responsibility to eliminate this risk," CEO Dennis Muilenburg said in a video. "We own it, and we know how to do it."

Jim Hall, a former chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, said the preliminary findings add urgency to re-examine the way that the Federal Aviation Administration uses employees of aircraft manufacturers to conduct safety-related tasks, including tests and inspections — a decades-old policy that raises questions about the agency's independence and is now under review by the U.S. Justice Department, the Transportation Department's inspector general and congressional committees.

"It is clear now that the process itself failed to produce a safe aircraft," Hall said. "The focus now is to see if there were steps that were skipped or tests that were not properly done."

The 33-page preliminary report, which is subject to change in the coming months, is based on information from the plane's flight data and cockpit voice recorders, the so-called black boxes. It includes a minute-by-minute narrative of a gripping and confusing scene in the cockpit.

Just one minute into Flight 302 from Addis Ababa to Nairobi in neighboring Kenya, the captain, Yared Getachew, reported that they were having flight-control problems.

Then the anti-stall system kicked in and pushed the nose of the plane down for nine seconds. Instead of climbing, the plane descended slightly. Audible warnings — "Don't Sink" — sounded in the cockpit. The pilots fought to turn the nose of the plane up, and briefly they were able to resume climbing.

But the automatic anti-stall system pushed the nose down again, triggering more squawks of "Don't Sink" from the plane's ground-proximity warning system.

Following a procedure that Boeing reiterated after the Lion Air crash, the Ethiopian pilots flipped two switches and disconnected the anti-stall system, then tried to regain control. They asked to return to the Addis Ababa airport, but were continuing to struggle getting the plane to gain altitude.

Then they broke with Boeing procedure and returned power to controls including the anti-stall system, perhaps hoping to use power to adjust a tail surface that controls the pitch up or down of a plane, or maybe out of sheer desperation.

One final time, the automated system kicked in, pushing the plane into a nose dive, according to the report.

A half-minute later, the cockpit voice recording ended, the plane crashed, and all 157 people on board were killed. The plane's impact left a crater 10 meters deep.

The Max is Boeing's newest version of its workhorse single-aisle jetliner, the 737, which dates to the 1960s. Fewer than 400 Max jets have been sent to airlines around the world, but Boeing has taken orders for 4,600 more.

Boeing delivered this particular plane, tail number ET-AVJ, to Ethiopian Airlines in November. By the day of Flight 302, it had made nearly 400 flights and been in the air for 1,330 hours — still very new by airline standards.

The pilots were young, too, and between them they had a scant 159 hours of flying time on the Max.

The captain, Getachew, was just 29 but had accumulated more than 8,000 hours of flying since completing work at the airline's training academy in 2010. He had flown more than 1,400 hours on Boeing 737s but just 103 hours on the Max. That may not be surprising, given that Ethiopian Airlines had just five of the planes, including ET-AVJ.

The co-pilot, Ahmed Nur Mohammad Nur, was only 25 and was granted a license to fly the 737 and the Max on Dec. 12 of last year. He had logged just 361 flight hours — not enough to be hired as a pilot at a

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U.S. airline. Of those hours, 207 were on 737s, including 56 hours on Max jets.

Thursday's preliminary report found that both pilots performed all the procedures recommended by Boeing on the March 10 flight but still could not control the jet.

While Boeing continues to work on its software update, Max jets remain grounded worldwide. The CEO said the company is taking "a comprehensive, disciplined approach" to fixing the flight-control software.

But some critics, including Hall, the former NTSB chairman, question why the work has taken so long.

"Don't you think if Boeing knew what the fix was, we would have the fix by now?" he said. "They said after the Lion Air accident there was going to be a fix, yet there was a second accident with no fix. Now, in response to the worldwide reaction, the plane is grounded and there is still not a fix."

APNewsBreak: White House withdraws nomination to lead ICE

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House on Thursday withdrew the nomination of a longtime border official to lead U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement as the Trump administration grapples with a massive increase in Southern border crossings that are straining the system with no easy solution, according to people with knowledge of the move.

The paperwork on Ron Vitiello was sent to members of Congress Thursday, the people said, and the decision was unexpected and met with confusion. Vitiello had been scheduled to travel with President Donald Trump to the border on Friday, but was no longer going, one official said. He will still remain acting director, they said.

One Homeland Security official insisted it was nothing but a paperwork error that had later been corrected. But other, higher-level officials said the move did not appear to be a mistake, even though they were not informed ahead of time.

The people had direct knowledge of the letter but were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Vitiello was nominated to lead ICE, the agency tasked with enforcing immigration law in the interior of the U.S., after more than 30 years in law enforcement, starting in 1985 with the U.S. Border Patrol. He was previously Border Patrol chief and deputy commissioner U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which oversees the patrol.

Vitiello took over during a time of unprecedented spotlight and scrutiny for the agency. Part of ICE's mission is to arrest immigrants in the U.S. illegally, which has made it a symbol of President Donald Trump's hardline immigration policies.

He had been acting head since June 2018, nominated in August, had a Senate confirmation hearing in November and his nomination had passed one Senate panel, the people said. But because Homeland Security touches on so many topics, a second committee also had jurisdiction and his nomination was still under discussion there. Some Democrats had concerns, and a union representing some ICE agents had opposed his nomination.

Department of Homeland Security officials referred questions to the White House, which did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

The move by the White House came as immigration officials were dealing with a 12-year high in U.S.-Mexico border crossings — and a recent flare-up by Trump who once again threatened to close the border entirely by the end of this week, before backing off.

For many years, families arriving at the border were typically released from U.S. custody immediately and allowed to settle with family or friends in the U.S. while their immigration cases wound their way through the courts, a process that often takes years and has been derided by Trump as "catch and release."

But in recent months, the number of families crossing into the U.S. has climbed to record highs, pushing the system to the breaking point. As a result, ICE was releasing families faster, in greater numbers and at points farther removed from the border. Since Dec. 21, the agency set free more than 125,000 people who came into the U.S. as families.

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Some legal immigrants in marijuana jobs denied citizenship

By KATHLEEN FOODY Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Colorado officials are warning legal immigrants that working in the state's marijuana industry could jeopardize their legal status, after two people said they were denied U.S. citizenship because of their jobs.

Although 10 states broadly allow its use and sale, federal law still bans marijuana and immigration authorities say they are bound to follow that prohibition when reviewing citizenship applications.

Attorneys representing the two legal immigrants from Colorado, and Denver officials, accused the Trump administration of quietly targeting immigrants seeking to work in the expanding field. Immigration advocates said Thursday they have seen others denied citizenship based on past or ongoing work in cannabis-related jobs, but it is not clear how many cases exist.

Oswaldo Barrientos, one of those denied citizenship, said he began working in the industry in 2014. He was inspired by the research he had done into medical products after his mother was diagnosed with skin cancer.

Barrientos, 30, said he was brought to the U.S. from El Salvador as an infant and was granted a green card when he was 13.

He said he didn't anticipate any problems with his citizenship application. He is fluent in English and said he has no criminal history, pays taxes and graduated high school. But during an interview in November, the immigration official focused on Barrientos' job with a state-licensed company that grows marijuana, he said.

Weeks later, he received a letter from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services denying him because of his job, his lawyers said.

"I was shocked, appalled, sad," Barrientos said. "It was a mixture of emotions. I had no idea I was going to be in this situation."

Barrientos' attorneys Aaron Elinoff and Bryce Downer, who specialize in immigration law in Colorado, said they also represent a woman whose citizenship application was denied because of a previous job at a marijuana dispensary. She asked not to be named publicly because of a new job in the medical field, they said.

"Frankly, these are the people we want to be citizens," Elinoff said. "And the U.S. government is telling them no. We don't know how many people have been denied on the same issue."

Kathy Brady, a senior staff attorney with the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, said legal immigrants have reported similar denials in Colorado and Washington state, where marijuana also is legal. Brady said she doesn't know how many people have been denied citizenship for their work in the marijuana industry.

She advises people without U.S. citizenship to find work elsewhere unless federal law changes.

"Even if you have had a green card for 20 years, you had better not work in any aspect of this industry and you better not use marijuana," Brady said.

Deborah Cannon, a spokeswoman for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, said the agency does not comment on individual cases. She defended denials based on involvement with marijuana, saying the agency must follow federal law that prevents its use or sale.

"Despite state law that may allow medical marijuana use, the Supreme Court has held that Congress' authority under the Commerce Clause empowers it to prohibit drug distribution and possession, even if the prohibited activities are not also illegal under state law," she said. "When adjudicating applicants for citizenship, the agency is required to apply federal law."

The use and sale of marijuana for adults is broadly permitted in 10 states. More than 30 states allow a variety of marijuana-based products for medical purposes.

Advocates have warned immigrants of the peril that using state-permitted marijuana could do to their legal status for years and are expanding that message to include employment by marijuana businesses.

The Immigrant Legal Resource Center began working with California's employment agency to answer workers' questions this year. On Wednesday, the Denver agency that regulates marijuana businesses told companies to warn new employees that their work could block citizenship applications.

Denver Mayor Michael Hancock met with Barrientos and others this week before calling on U.S. Attorney General William Barr to issue formal guidance on the issue.

"Denver understands the need for federal laws and regulations regarding citizenship and immigration, but we are seeing the heartbreaking effects that those federal laws and regulations are having on our residents," Hancock wrote to Barr.

Barrientos said he plans to appeal the denial of his application. His attorneys are also considering his options in federal court.

In the meantime, he is following their advice not to leave the country and risk being barred from re-entering. He plans to keep his job and calls the government's denial of his application "downright wrong."

"I'm trying to help people," he said. "We want to work hard to live the American dream. That's all I've ever wanted."

Kathleen Foody is a member of AP's marijuana beat team. Follow her at twitter.com/katiefoody. Find complete AP marijuana coverage here: apnews.com/tag/Marijuana.

Chicago to sue Jussie Smollett for costs of investigation

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Jussie Smollett has refused to pay more than \$130,000 to reimburse Chicago investigative costs and the city said Thursday it will sue the "Empire" actor for money spent investigating what officials say was a phony racist, anti-gay attack that Smollett staged.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel's law chief sent Smollett a March 28 letter demanding he pay \$130,106 — plus 15 cents — for overtime worked by detectives and officers in looking into his claims. It set Thursday as the deadline to pay.

The City Law Department said in a Thursday evening statement that it was already drafting a lawsuit in response and would file it "in the near future."

Smollett, who is black and gay, maintains he told the truth in reporting that two masked men assaulted him in downtown Chicago on Jan. 29, shouting slurs and wrapping a rope around his neck. He said his attackers also yelled, "This is MAGA country," a reference to President Donald Trump's campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again."

The lawsuit could lead to a civil trial, where jurors would have to answer the question of whether Smollett orchestrated the attack.

There will be no criminal trial on that question after Cook County prosecutors last week dropped all 16 felony counts against Smollett, saying they believed they could prove the charges but that it wasn't worth the time and expense. The surprise decision angered Emanuel, who called it a "whitewash" and said the city's reputation "was dragged through the mud" by Smollett.

"As part of this legal action, the Law Department will pursue the full measure of damages allowed under the ordinance," the statement from Chicago said. It didn't specify what those damages could be.

The municipal code stipulates that the city can triple the amount originally demanded if someone fails to pay an initial amount. That means the city could demand more than \$390,000 from Smollett. If a civil case is decided in the city's favor and Smollett still refuses to pay, his bank accounts could be frozen and his wages garnished.

A spokeswoman for Smollett's legal team declined comment on the latest development.

When the city raised the issue last week of Smollett reimbursing Chicago, the actor's lawyers said it was city officials "who owe" Smollett "an apology — for dragging an innocent man's character through the mud." They added: "Jussie has paid enough."

Smollett admitted no wrongdoing, but he did agree to do some community service before charges were dropped. He also agreed to forfeit \$10,000 he paid in bond money after he was charged, which some legal experts say city lawyers could try to use against him in the civil case as an implied admission of guilt.

Taking the matter to trial, carries risks for Smollett, including by extending negative publicity and potentially making it harder for him to get his entertainment career back on track.

Much of the evidence that would have been presented at a criminal trial would be brought out at any civil trial. Smollett could also be required to sit for depositions, forcing him for the first time to explain evidence that prosecutors said demonstrated he was lying.

To the city's advantage, the threshold for proving he staged the incident will be lower than in criminal court. The city won't have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Smollett staged the attack in civil court, only that it's more likely true than not true that he did.

Among the risks for the city is that the civil litigation could end up costing far more in legal bills than it could ever hope to get from Smollett. In any lawsuit, there's always the possibility that a judge throws it out before it ever gets to trial.

Mayor-elect Lori Lightfoot, who will be sworn in as Chicago's mayor on May 20, could reverse any legal action Emanuel's law office takes against Smollett in coming weeks. Lightfoot will be Chicago's first black female mayor.

Lightfoot, a former federal prosecutor, said during a pre-election debate that "the public has to have answers as to why these charges were dismissed." But she hasn't detailed any action she might take as mayor regarding Smollett.

The Smollett case and the city's effort to make him pay are both highly unusual, according to several legal experts.

One with some similarities is the case of a University of Iowa physician, Gary Hunninghake, who reported that he was attacked and stabbed while jogging in Chicago in 2010. After contradictions in his account, he eventually conceded he'd stabbed himself. A year later, he was ordered to pay more than \$15,000 to reimburse the city for costs of the investigation.

Follow Michael Tarm on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/mtarm>

Check out the AP's complete coverage of the Jussie Smollett case.

Barr defends handling of Mueller's Russia report

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General William Barr on Thursday defended his handling of special counsel Robert Mueller's report on the Russia investigation, saying the confidential document contains sensitive grand jury material that prevented it from being immediately released to the public.

The statement came as Barr confronts concerns that his four-page letter summarizing Mueller's conclusions unduly sanitized the full report in President Donald Trump's favor, including on the key question of whether the president obstructed justice. House Democrats on Wednesday approved subpoenas for Mueller's entire report and any exhibits and other underlying evidence that the Justice Department might withhold.

The disparity in length between Barr's letter and Mueller's full report, which totals nearly 400 pages, raises the likelihood of additional significant information that was put forward by the special counsel's office but not immediately shared by the attorney general.

In Thursday's statement, Barr defended the decision to release a brief summary letter two days after receiving the report on March 22. He has previously said he did not believe it would be in the public's interest to release the full document in piecemeal or gradual fashion, and that he did not intend for his letter summarizing Mueller's "principal conclusions" to be an "exhaustive recounting" of the special counsel's investigation.

Barr is now expected to release the entire report, with redactions, by mid-April.

"Given the extraordinary public interest in the matter, the Attorney General decided to release the report's bottom-line findings and his conclusions immediately — without attempting to summarize the report — with the understanding that the report itself would be released after the redaction process," the Justice Department statement said.

The statement also said that every page of Mueller's report was marked that it may contain grand jury material "and therefore could not immediately be released."

A Justice Department official, speaking Thursday on condition of anonymity to discuss a confidential process, said summaries of the findings that Mueller's team included as part of its report also contained grand jury information, making it hard for a swift release.

Barr has said that while Mueller did not establish a criminal conspiracy between Russia and the Trump campaign, the special counsel left open a decision on whether the president had tried to obstruct the Russia investigation. The Mueller team laid out evidence on both sides of the question in a way that neither established a crime nor exonerated Trump, according to Barr's letter.

Barr has said that he and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein determined that Mueller's evidence was insufficient to support an obstruction allegation.

Barr said he was continuing to work with Mueller's office on redactions to the report so that it could be released to Congress and the public.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

Fed's report condemning Alabama prisons: State vows action

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama authorities vowed Thursday to begin the monumental task of fixing their troubling prison problems, responding to a U.S. Department of Justice report that condemned excessive violence, inmate deaths and a critical staffing shortage in the state correctional system.

The Justice Department on Wednesday gave the state 49 days to respond with a remedial plan or face a federal lawsuit for conditions so bad the department believes they violate the prohibition on cruel and usual punishment.

"I think it's an enormous task we have in front of us," said state Sen. Cam Ward, head of a legislative prison oversight committee. He called the findings "deeply humiliating" for Alabama. "It's disgusting. I mean, it is."

The federal report released Wednesday reeled off a chilling litany of examples of violence: An inmate died after being stabbed while other prisoners banged on a locked door for help. Another prisoner was strangled, left face down so long that "his face was flattened" by the time his body was discovered. Another prisoner told of being tied up and tortured for two days by fellow inmates in retaliation for reporting a sexual assault.

The Department of Justice wrote that overcrowding, understaffing, excessive violence, a failure to stop sexual assaults, poor facilities and the indifference of officials were among the factors creating what it called inhumane conditions in Alabama's prisons.

Gov. Kay Ivey said Thursday that the state recognizes the problems in state prisons and said the Justice Department identified many of the same concerns the state has already acknowledged. She suggested that the state will do what is needed to avoid court-ordered mandates.

"This is just reinforcing the need we've been seeing all along. This is an Alabama problem. It's got to have an Alabama solution and we'll be addressing that in fast order," Ivey said.

Prison staffing was a key concern of federal investigators.

The state has about 1,500 correctional officers patrolling state prisons. The report called for the immediate addition of 500 more officers.

The Alabama Department of Corrections earlier this year requested legislative funding to hire 500 of-

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ficers, and said it plans to make the same request in subsequent years. It noted at the time that staffing shortages directly correlated to high rates of violence.

Ward said while the funding may be there, a hiring effort of that magnitude is still an enormous undertaking.

"I don't see how you possibly hire 500 in one year," Ward said.

The department said Alabama also must comply with staffing orders arising from an ongoing lawsuit over prison mental health case by 2020. In that case, the state's own expert recommended the addition of about 2,000 officers, and a federal judge said the state should reach those targets by 2022.

"Without adequate staff, they can't solve these other problems," said Maria Morris, senior supervising attorney at the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The department said that physical conditions of prisons themselves were unconstitutional, noting design problems with the buildings and a lack of functioning cameras, mirrors and fire alarms.

In February, Ivey's administration announced intent to build three new large regional prisons for men that would replace most male facilities.

However, the Justice Department wrote that new facilities might help resolve some issues but "it is important to note that new facilities alone will not resolve the contributing factors to the overall unconstitutional condition" of the state's prisons. Those contributing factors included understaffing, corruption, non-existent investigations, violence, illicit drugs, and sexual abuse, the report said.

Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, said the focus on construction is a distraction from fundamental issues of staffing and investigative practices.

"I don't think we are going to solve the problems we have in our prisons by building more prisons," said Stevenson. "I'm not indifferent to some of the infrastructure challenges, but when you have a college football team who can't win a game, you don't say, 'Let's build a new stadium, that'll fix our problems.'"

Stevenson also said the culture of the prisons needs to be changed.

"A lot of prisoners feel like they'll be punished for reporting an assault," Stevenson said.

Ivey said the Justice Department has shown a willingness to help as the state develops a response.

Said Ward: "We have to come up with a plan that says we are making an effort. You've got to show you are making a good faith effort on all these targets."

Emmert: NCAA committed to prohibiting athletes from gambling

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Sports Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — As legalized wagering on sports spreads, the NCAA remains adamant about prohibiting college athletes from betting.

The association and its members have had to manage the changing landscape of legalized gambling since a Supreme Court decision last year opened the door for states to introduce sports wagering. Seven states have done so since, joining Nevada.

NCAA rules prohibit athletes and coaches from gambling on sports and it is unlikely that will change any time soon.

"The membership wants a prohibition of athletes gambling in any sports, period," NCAA President Mark Emmert said Thursday.

Emmert held his annual Final Four news conference at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minnesota. He also received questions about the college basketball corruption scandal; the recent ruling in an antitrust lawsuit against the NCAA and sexual assault policy.

As for gambling, the NCAA fought against legalized wagering on sporting events. Now that its cause has been lost, Emmert said the NCAA is working in conjunction with some professional leagues to push for federal guidelines around legalized wagering for states to follow.

"We need to try to make sure that we know that everyone is working off consistent data and information because that becomes a source of a lot of bad behavior when you've got lots and lots of different data sources," Emmert said. "Another thing that we're moving forward on aggressively is we need to

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have integrity services in place where we can effectively monitor what's going on in all the various sports books so that, when we see inexplicable behavior on a betting line, we know what's going on there, and we can act accordingly."

The NCAA has indefinitely lifted its ban on holding championship events in states where gambling is legal. NCAA legislation would need to be passed to permanently change that rule.

"I don't want to presuppose where they're going to go, but so far I haven't heard any great objections to the position we're in right now," Emmert said.

The FBI's investigation into college basketball has already resulted in the convictions of three men on fraud charges, including two shoe company executives, and guilty pleas by several former college basketball assistant coaches.

Another trial is scheduled in New York later this year.

Emmert said the NCAA is petitioning the court of federal prosecutors to provide finding from hearings and evidence used in trials. While the NCAA can now use information from outside sources to conduct investigations, the courts are not obligated to provide its findings.

"So we petitioned, and we're going to continue to argue aggressively that they should provide that information so we can get to the facts since there's so much interest, not just on our part, but across the country in knowing what really transpired," he said.

— Emmert said that while there have been discussions among NCAA officials about banning athletes from competing if they have sexual assault on their records, coming up with a standardized policy is difficult when laws change from state to state.

"I think it's going to continue to be a debate. I actually hope it continues to be a debate because it's a very important subject," Emmert said. "Individual schools make decisions and distinctions based on those convictions, but right now it's up to individual schools. In some cases, some conferences are looking at it, but I don't expect that discussion to go away."

— On last month's ruling in the so-called Alston federal antitrust case, Emmert told the AP in an interview Wednesday the decision reinforced that college athletes should be treated as students not employees — even though the judge ruled NCAA rules violate antitrust laws. Still, the NCAA is appealing the decision.

"We don't like the notion that we're in violation of antitrust laws," Emmert said.

Emmert added the association does not believe the courts should decide what qualifies as a benefit tethered to education.

"We just find that an unworkable proposal that anytime you want to have a discussion over whether or not something is or isn't tethered education we have to go back to a judge and have that debate and discussion. That just seems inherently inappropriate and not an appropriate role for the judiciary, but one that does fit the role of the NCAA," Emmert said.

On Thursday, Emmert reiterated that position and said he remains committed to ensuring student-athletes are involved in the NCAA's legislative process.

Follow Ralph D. Russo at <https://twitter.com/ralphDrussoAP> and listen at <https://podcastone.com/AP-Top-25-College-Football-Podcast>

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/MarchMadness> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_Top25

Texas Tech's Beard named AP men's college coach of the year

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Chris Beard of Texas Tech had a cheering, boisterous audience as he took stage Thursday to accept the trophy as The Associated Press men's college basketball coach of the year — his players and family filling the front row to celebrate his success as their own.

He was happy to share a moment he said belonged to them, too.

"I don't know what I possibly could have that John Wooden and Bob Knight and (Michigan State coach

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Tom) Izzo didn't have, but I don't think that they probably had their team — 30 minutes removed from practice — sitting on the front row when we got the award, so this is special," Beard told his players from the stage. "So I want to thank each player that played on this year's team. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you guys."

The players' presence — full of cheers and even a news conference question from graduate transfer Tariq Owens — was an unusual sight for the annual award presentation. It was also a sign of how the Red Raiders are bonded by their well-traveled coach's work, work, work approach that guided his career on its winding path through obscure, overlooked coaching jobs to the college basketball's biggest stage.

"I've always believed you have to be who you are," Beard said in an interview with the AP. "You can never forget who you are. ... Sometimes as you advance in the profession and the logo on your shirt changes or the title next to your name changes, you kind of change. I've never wanted to do that."

Beard earned 20 of 64 votes from the same panel that selects the weekly AP Top 25, with voters submitting ballots before the start of the NCAA Tournament. Beard's team had won a share of its first Big 12 regular-season title at the time of the voting. In the tournament, Texas Tech pushed past top-seeded Gonzaga to win the West and earn its ticket to Minneapolis.

In this Final Four, Izzo and Tony Bennett of Virginia have also won the award.

Houston's Kelvin Sampson was second with 13 votes after the Cougars finished with a program-record 33 wins before losing in the Sweet 16.

Beard and Sampson were the only coaches to receive at least 10 votes, with 12 coaches splitting the rest of the ballots.

Beard has guided the Red Raiders to the program's first Final Four behind the growth of sophomore Jarrett Culver and a rugged defense that is locks down opponents with an efficiency not seen in years.

Not bad for a team that lost six of its top eight scorers from last year's Elite Eight run. Nor for a 46-year-old coach who is only in his third season at Texas Tech since making stops at Division II and III programs within the past seven years.

It's sheer force of will that helped Beard get here, a tireless work ethic rooted in the simple belief that anything less won't be enough, along with the feeling of being an underdog no matter how many games his team wins.

"It's just reality, it's not a made-up story," Beard said. "I wasn't a great Division I player myself and everything that I've kind of worked for in this has just been about trying to prove people wrong and constantly trying to validate our last success.

"Even this week with everything at stake, I find myself kind of thinking about next year and our recruiting class and starting next week," Beard said. "I don't think it's pressure, but I feel that responsibility to get back in the fight next year. That's just my mentality."

It's easy to see why when tracking a career path filled with stops at jobs way, way off the main road.

There was the first head coaching job at Fort Scott Community College in Fort Scott, Kansas — population 7,813. There was a stint with the American Basketball Association's South Carolina Warriors. He later coached at Division III McMurry (2012-13) and Division II Angelo State (2013-15) before getting his first Division I head coaching job at Arkansas-Little Rock in a career that was finally set to take off after years of largely unnoticed toil.

True to form, there was one final twist in the road before getting here: a brief 19-day stop at UNLV before deciding the pull of Texas Tech — where he had worked previously as an assistant for 10 years under both Bob and Pat Knight — was too much to ignore.

"He's a great motivator man, that's what he does," senior Brandone Francis said. "He started down below, junior college and DII and schools that I don't really even know the name of. He's a grinder, man. He works extremely hard. He has the right people around him."

VOTING BREAKDOWN

Chris Beard, Texas Tech — 20

Kelvin Sampson, Houston — 13

Mike Young, Wofford — 6

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Nate Oats, Buffalo — 5
Rick Barnes, Tennessee — 4
Tony Bennett, Virginia — 3
Mark Few, Gonzaga — 3
Tom Izzo, Michigan State — 2
Matt Painter, Purdue — 2
Roy Williams, North Carolina — 2
John Beilein, Michigan — 1
Mike Krzyzewski, Duke — 1
Matt Langel, Colgate — 1
Eric Musselman, Nevada — 1

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/MarchMadness> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_Top25

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White House pushes back on request for Trump tax forms

By MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House said Thursday that Democratic efforts to obtain President Donald Trump's tax records are "political games."

A House committee chairman formally asked the IRS Wednesday to provide six years of Trump's personal tax returns and the returns for some of his businesses as Democrats try to shed light on his complex financial dealings and potential conflicts of interest.

The request by Massachusetts Rep. Richard Neal, who heads the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, is the first such demand for a sitting president's tax information in 45 years. The unprecedented move is likely to set off a huge legal battle between Democrats controlling the House and the Trump administration.

Neal made the request Wednesday in a letter to IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig, asking for Trump's personal and business returns for 2013 through 2018. He asked for the documents in seven days, setting an April 10 deadline.

Trump told reporters Wednesday he "would not be inclined" to provide his tax returns to the committee. White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said Thursday morning that the White House "is not interested in playing a bunch of political games like the Democrats in Congress clearly want to spend their time doing."

Asked again later Thursday for his response to Neal's demand, Trump didn't provide a direct answer. "They'll speak to my lawyers; they'll speak to the attorney general," Trump said at the White House, referring to Attorney General William Barr, whom he appointed.

Justice Department spokeswoman Kerri Kupec declined to comment.

An IRS spokesman said the agency had no comment on Neal's request.

Democrats insist that obtaining Trump's tax filings falls within their mandate of congressional oversight. Republicans have denounced it as a political witch hunt and invoked privacy concerns.

"We have completed the necessary groundwork for a request of this magnitude, and I am certain we are within our legitimate legislative, legal and oversight rights," Neal said in a statement Wednesday evening.

Rep. Kevin Brady of Texas, the senior Republican on the Ways and Means panel, denounced the move as "an abuse of the tax-writing committees' statutory authority."

"Weaponizing our nation's tax code by targeting political foes sets a dangerous precedent and weakens Americans' privacy rights," Brady wrote in a letter Wednesday to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who oversees the IRS. "As you know, by law all Americans have a fundamental right to the privacy of the personal information found in their tax returns."

Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise, the No. 2 House GOP leader, said "a lot of Americans are shocked" that

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Congress can review tax returns, "whether it's a blue collar worker or president of the United States."

The legal battle set to ensue could take years to resolve, possibly stretching beyond the 2020 presidential election.

Trump broke with decades of tradition for presidential candidates by refusing to release his income tax filings during his 2016 campaign. He has said he won't release them because he is being audited, even though IRS officials have said taxpayers under audit are free to release their returns. Trump claimed at a news conference following the November election that the filings are too complex for people to understand.

The IRS has a policy of auditing the tax returns of all sitting presidents and vice presidents, "yet little is known about the effectiveness of this program," Neal said in the statement. "On behalf of the American people, the Ways and Means Committee must determine if that policy is being followed, and if so, whether these audits are conducted fully and appropriately."

Neal continued, "In order to fairly make that determination, we must obtain President Trump's tax returns and review whether the IRS is carrying out its responsibilities."

Neal is one of only three congressional officials authorized to make a written request to the Treasury secretary for anyone's tax returns. The Internal Revenue Service is part of the Treasury Department. A rarely used 1924 law says the Treasury chief "shall furnish" the requested material to members of the Ways and Means Committee for them to examine behind closed doors.

A spokesman for Mnuchin didn't respond to requests for comment.

Mnuchin suggested in testimony to Congress last month that he would protect Trump's privacy if the House Democrats requested his tax returns. "We will examine the request and we will follow the law ... and we will protect the president as we would protect any taxpayer" regarding their right to privacy, Mnuchin said.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Alan Fram, Mary Clare Jalonick, Darlene Superville and Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Man charged with killing Nipsey Hussle pleads not guilty

By **ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer**

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The man charged with killing rapper Nipsey Hussle was ordered held on \$5 million bail after pleading not guilty Thursday to murder and attempted murder charges.

Eric R. Holder Jr., 29, making his first court appearance after Sunday's shooting and subsequent two-day manhunt, spoke only to say "yeah" to Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Teresa Sullivan's questions.

His attorney, Christopher Darden, did not dispute the bail amount, which the prosecution requested. Darden declined comment after the hearing.

Holder is charged with murder and two counts of attempted murder in connection with the attack outside Hussle's The Marathon clothing store on Sunday that left the rapper dead and two other men wounded.

No additional details about motive were released during Thursday's hearing.

Darden, who gained nationwide fame as part of the prosecution team at O.J. Simpson's 1995 murder trial, argued before the hearing against allowing media outlets to shoot photos and video in the courtroom, saying that the prosecution has not established with certainty that they have the right person, and publicizing his image would interfere with Holder getting a fair trial.

"The issue of identity is still in question," Darden said.

Deputy District Attorney John McKinney argued that identity will not be an issue in the case, and said that Holder's photo had already been widely spread during the hunt for him.

Sullivan ruled that the cameras could remain.

Holder and Hussle, who knew each other, had several conversations throughout the day Sunday before Holder eventually returned with a handgun and shot Hussle, authorities allege.

If convicted, Holder faces life in prison.

In 2012 he pleaded no contest to possession of a loaded firearm and was sentenced to six months in jail and three years' probation. The case filed Thursday includes a charge that he was a felon in possession

of a gun during the attack on Hussle.

He was ordered to return to court for another hearing May 10.

Holder fled the scene in a car driven by a woman who has since been interviewed by police and released, police Lt. Chris Ramirez said.

Hussle, 33, was engaged to actress Lauren London, with whom he had a 2-year-old son. He had another daughter from a previous relationship.

He was a beloved figure in the community that he was seeking to rebuild starting with his clothing store, among his fellow entertainers, and with public officials who praised his philanthropy and advocacy.

Hussle had success in hip-hop's inner circles for 10 years through his coveted mixtapes, then last year broke big with his major-label debut album, "Victory Lap," which was nominated for a Grammy.

The California State Senate adjourned in his honor on Thursday.

"He was a manifestation, from my perspective, of the American dream, even the California dream," said Sen. Holly Mitchell, a Democrat from Los Angeles.

"He represents a new generation of entertainer turned activist turned entrepreneur," she said, noting his activism on police brutality and gun violence.

Congresswoman Karen Bass said she planned to honor Hussle on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"I will be heading to the House Floor next week to formally enter Nipsey Hussle's contributions to South Los Angeles into the Congressional Record where it will be a part of United States history forever," Bass tweeted.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton> .

Russia revamps Arctic military base to stake claim on region

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

SEVERNY KLEVER MILITARY BASE, Russia (AP) — Missile launchers ply icy roads and air defense systems point menacingly into the sky at this Arctic military outpost, a key vantage point for Russia to project its power over the resource-rich polar region.

The base, dubbed Severny Klever (Northern Clover) for its trefoil shape, is painted in the white, blue and red colors of the Russian national flag. It has been designed so soldiers can reach all of its sprawling facilities without venturing outdoors — a useful precaution in an area where temperatures often plunge to minus 50 Celsius (minus 58 Fahrenheit) during the winter, and even in the short Arctic summer are often freezing at night.

It's strategically located on Kotelny Island, between the Laptev Sea and the East Siberian Sea on the Arctic shipping route, and permanently houses up to 250 military personnel responsible for maintaining air and sea surveillance facilities and coastal defenses like anti-ship missiles.

The Russian base has enough supplies to remain fully autonomous for more than a year.

"Our task is to monitor the airspace and the northern sea route," said base commander Lt. Col. Vladimir Pasechnik. "We have all we need for our service and comfortable living."

Russia is not alone in trying to assert jurisdiction over parts of the Arctic, as shrinking polar ice opens fresh opportunities for resource exploration and new shipping lanes. The United States, Canada, Denmark and Norway are jostling for position, as well, and China also has shown an increasing interest in the polar region.

But while U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has seen the Arctic through the lens of security and economic competition with Russia and China, it has yet to demonstrate that the region is a significant priority in its overall foreign policy. The post of special U.S. representative for the Arctic has remained vacant since Trump assumed office.

Russia, however, has made reaffirming its presence in the Arctic a top goal, not the least because the region is believed to hold up to one-quarter of the Earth's undiscovered oil and gas. Russian President

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Vladimir Putin has cited estimates that put the value of Arctic mineral riches at \$30 trillion.

The move has alarmed Russia's neighbors, analysts say.

"In Russia, the Northern sea route has been described as a bonanza with lots of potential of economic development," said Flemming Splidsboel Hansen of the Danish Institute for International Studies. "And that's why there is a need for military capacity in the area. It is likely meant as defensive, but it is being interpreted by the West as offensive."

Kristian Soeby Kristensen, a researcher at Copenhagen University in Denmark, said the problem of Russian hegemony in the Arctic was most obvious to Norway.

"Norway is a small country, whose next-door neighbor is mighty Russia, which has placed the bulk of its military capacity right next to them," Soeby Kristensen said. "Norway is extraordinarily worried."

In 2015, Russia submitted to the United Nations a revised bid for vast territories in the Arctic. It claimed 1.2 million square kilometers (over 463,000 square miles) of Arctic sea shelf, extending more than 350 nautical miles (about 650 kilometers) from the shore.

As part of a multi-pronged effort to stake Russia's claims on the Arctic region, the Kremlin has poured massive resources into modernizing Soviet-era installations there.

The military outpost on Kotelny Island fell into neglect after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, but a massive effort to build a new base began in 2014 and took several years.

A group of reporters brought to the island by the Russian Defense Ministry on Wednesday were shown Bastion anti-ship missile launchers positioned for a drill near the shore and Pantsyr-S1 air defense systems firing shots at a practice target.

The Russian military has kept Western media from visiting its Arctic facilities, so the trip offered a unique opportunity to watch the Russian expansion up close.

A big radar dome looms on a hill overlooking the coast, underlining the base's main mission of monitoring the strategic area.

In contrast with drab, Soviet-era facilities, the pristine new base features spacious living quarters, a gym and a sauna. Putin's words about the importance of the Arctic for Russia dot the base's walls and a symbolic border post sits in a hallway.

Soldiers at the base say they are proud of their mission despite the challenging Arctic environment.

"Proving to myself that I can do it raises my self-esteem," said one of the soldiers, Sergei Belogov. "Weather is our enemy here, so we need to protect ourselves from it to serve the Motherland."

Extreme cold and fierce winds often make it hard to venture outside, and even winterized vehicles may have trouble operating when temperatures plunge to extreme lows and even special lubricants freeze.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to Putin in December that the military has rebuilt or expanded numerous facilities across the polar region, revamping runways and deploying air defense assets. He said renovation works were conducted on a long string of Arctic territories.

The expanded infrastructure has allowed the Russian military to restore full radar coverage of the nation's 22,600-kilometer (14,000-mile) Arctic frontier and deploy fighter jets to protect its airspace.

The military also has undertaken a cleanup effort across the region, working to remove tens of thousands of tons of waste from the Arctic territories, most of it rusty fuel tanks left behind by the Soviet military.

The Russian soldiers share the island with polar bears, arctic foxes and wolves.

Officers said that, soon after the base opened, curious bears regularly prowled near its walls, sometimes even peering into its windows. On some occasions, soldiers had to use a truck to spook away a particularly curious bear wandering nearby.

Soldiers interviewed at the base said they marveled at the area's wildlife and its majestic Arctic landscapes.

"The nature here is extremely beautiful," said Navy Lt. Umar Erkenov, who came from southern Russia. "Meeting a polar bear is an experience that fills you with emotions. We have established friendly ties with them from the start. We don't touch them, they don't touch us."

He said he's missing his wife and daughter, whom he can only see during his leave period once a year, but is proud of his mission.

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"Few people do their job under such conditions," he said. "I feel proud that I'm here with my unit, doing my duty and protecting the Motherland."

Matthew Lee in Washington, D.C. and Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark contributed to this report.

Asia shares mixed, Japan gains after wobbles on Wall Street

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares were mixed in Asia on Friday, with Chinese markets closed for a holiday. Japan's Nikkei 225 index added 0.3% to 21,794.37 while the Kospi in South Korea was flat at 2,206.76. Shares fell 0.9% in New Zealand and the S&P ASX in Australia dropped 0.8% to 6,128.60.

Overnight, Wall Street had another wobbly day of trading. Modest gains nudged the market's winning streak to a sixth straight day.

Markets have been wobbly throughout the week as investors wait for the U.S. government's jobs report on Friday and prepare for a new round of corporate earnings reports next week.

New government data on Thursday showing applications for unemployment aid fell last week to a 49-year low likely means Friday's jobs report will show a strong rebound in hiring after a weak February, said Phil Orlando, chief equity strategist at Federated Investors.

The S&P 500 index rose 0.2%, to 2,879.39. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.6% to 26,384.63.

The Nasdaq fell 0.1%, to 7,891.78, while the Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks picked up 0.4%, to 1,567.49.

Major indexes in Europe finished mostly lower.

Investors are also keeping a close watch on the latest rounds of U.S.-China trade negotiations.

President Donald Trump said Thursday that the two sides were "rounding the turn" in the talks, which resumed Wednesday in Washington.

No details were announced but Trump said after meeting with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He that "something monumental" could be announced within weeks.

Liu, China's top trade negotiator, told Trump that "because of your direct involvement, we do have great progress."

The dispute over technology policy, involving punitive tariffs imposed by both sides, has rattled markets and cast a pall over the outlook for the global economy.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose to 111.71 Japanese yen from 111.58 yen. The euro weakened to \$1.1225 from \$1.1240.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude lost 12 cents to \$61.98 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It dropped 0.6% to settle at \$62.10 a barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, shed 12 cents to \$69.13 per barrel.

Today in History

By the Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, April 5, the 95th day of 2019. There are 270 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 5, 1986, two American servicemen and a Turkish woman were killed in the bombing of a West Berlin discotheque, an incident which prompted a U.S. air raid on Libya more than a week later.

On this date:

In 1614, Indian Chief Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas married Englishman John Rolfe, a widower, in the Virginia Colony.

In 1915, Jess Willard knocked out Jack Johnson in the 26th round of their fight in Havana, Cuba, to claim

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boxing's world heavyweight title.

In 1955, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill resigned his office for health reasons. Democrat Richard J. Daley was first elected mayor of Chicago, defeating Republican Robert E. Merriam.

In 1964, Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur died in Washington, D.C., at age 84.

In 1974, Stephen King's first published novel, "Carrie," was released by Doubleday.

In 1975, nationalist Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek died in Taipei at age 87.

In 1976, reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes died in Houston at age 70.

In 1988, a 15-day hijacking ordeal began as gunmen forced a Kuwait Airways jumbo jet to land in Iran.

In 1991, former Sen. John Tower, R-Texas, his daughter Marian and 21 other people were killed in a commuter plane crash near Brunswick, Georgia.

In 2001, Wang Zhizhi became the first Chinese player to play in the NBA when he took the court for Dallas against Atlanta. (Wang scored six points and grabbed three rebounds as the Mavericks beat the Hawks 108-94.)

In 2005, ABC News anchorman Peter Jennings revealed he had lung cancer (he died in August 2005 at age 67).

In 2008, actor Charlton Heston, big-screen hero and later leader of the National Rifle Association, died in Beverly Hills, California, at age 84.

Ten years ago: North Korea fired a rocket over Japan, defying Washington, Tokyo and others who suspected the launch was a cover for a test of its long-range missile technology. President Barack Obama, visiting Prague, launched an effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons, calling them "the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War." The Pentagon quietly lifted an 18-year ban on media coverage of fallen U.S. service members.

Five years ago: Millions of Afghans defied Taliban threats and rain as they went to the polls to choose President Hamid Karzai's successor. (Ashraf Ghani emerged the winner.) Breanna Stewart, UConn's 6-foot-4 sophomore star, was named The Associated Press Player of the Year. Notre Dame's Muffet McGraw was selected coach of the year for the second straight season. Award-winning author and environmentalist Peter Matthiessen, 86, died on Long Island, New York.

One year ago: In his first public comments about Stormy Daniels, President Donald Trump said he didn't know about the \$130,000 payment his personal attorney Michael Cohen had made to the porn actress who alleged she had an affair with Trump. In a dramatic escalation of the trade dispute with China, Trump told the U.S. trade representative to consider slapping an additional \$100 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods. A Brazilian judge issued an arrest warrant for former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (loo-EEZ' ee-NAH'-see-oh LOO'-luh duh SEEL'-vuh) as the once-popular leader tried to mount a political comeback ahead of October elections; da Silva had sought to stay out of prison while he appealed a corruption conviction. A federal immigration raid took 97 people into custody at a Tennessee meat processing plant.

Today's Birthdays: Movie producer Roger Corman is 93. Former U.S. Secretary of State and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell is 82. Country singer Tommy Cash is 79. Actor Michael Moriarty is 78. Pop singer Allan Clarke (The Hollies) is 77. Writer-director Peter Greenaway is 77. Actor Max Gail is 76. Actress Jane Asher is 73. Singer Agnetha (ag-NEE'-tah) Faltskog (ABBA) is 69. Actor Mitch Pileggi is 67. Singer-songwriter Peter Case is 65. Hip-hop artist/actor Christopher "Kid" Reid is 55. Rock musician Mike McCready (Pearl Jam) is 53. Singer Paula Cole is 51. Actress Krista Allen is 48. Actress Victoria Hamilton is 48. Country singer Pat Green is 47. Rapper-producer Pharrell (fa-REHL') Williams is 46. Rapper/producer Juicy J is 44. Actor Sterling K. Brown is 43. Country singer-musician Mike Eli (The Eli Young Band) is 38. Actress Hayley Atwell is 37. Actress Lily James is 30.

Thought for Today: "I realized a long time ago that a belief which does not spring from a conviction in the emotions is no belief at all." — Evelyn Scott, American author (1893-1963).